

Josephites still choose teaching and they do it well, but others are found working in spirituality centres, retreat houses, counselling, family care, in parishes, the care of the elderly, community support to aboriginal people, and in professions as varied as chef, psychologist, archivist, and chaplain to seamen from all over the world in the ships in Sydney Harbour. What comes through in so many of the interviews is the resilience of the Josephites, their sense of humour, their affection for each other, their willingness to start learning all over again, their courage in adapting to changed times. Anne Henderson's book is rather too crammed and cramped; it offers the reader too brief a probing of each woman's life, but it does give a vivid picture of an Australian religious community and of the people they serve.

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HEART OF THE WORLD, CENTER OF THE CHURCH: *Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism and Liberation* by David L. Schindler, Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, and T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996, 322 pp., £29.95.

The first half of this book deals with 'Catholic liberalism', in politics, economics and the universities, in the United States. John Courtney Murray SJ, whose work on religious freedom shaped Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom, never escaped from a nature/grace dualism which secretly colluded with Enlightenment philosophies of the autonomous self and the privatization of religion (chapter 1). Neoconservative Catholic theorists like Richard Neuhaus, Michael Novak and George Weigel have done much to mediate Catholic thought to American liberal institutions but in the end they propose an account of freedom, creativity, entrepreneurship, etc., which has no grounding in the *Fiat* of Marian love (chapters 2 and 3). Theodore Hesburgh CSC, effectively the creator at South Bend, Indiana, of a great Catholic university, never understood that no university will be Catholic unless it emerges from participation in the triune life of the Godhead through the eucharist — which does not mean having Mass celebrated all round campus (chapter 4). American Catholic liberalism has achieved a lot, but it is not rooted in an authentic Catholic anthropology (chapter 5).

The outlines of a properly Catholic anthropology peep through these chapters of critique, which is developed in the second half of the book. The 'death of God' as heralded by Nietzsche and Derrida is a good story: the deistic-mechanistic God of Enlightenment liberal humanism should be allowed to die in order to make way for a trinitarian-God-centred view of the cosmos in terms of a logic of love (chapter 6). There is no way out of it — sanctity is *required* for Catholic academics, not an extracurricular concern (chapter 7). The action/contemplation dualism has to be displaced in favour of a proper understanding of the priority of contemplation in *all* human action (chapter 8). What that means, in turn, is that we have to recover a

theological sense of ourselves as primarily *feminine* (chapter 9). Finally, we need to see rationality in terms of relationality, and get philosophy and theology into harmony (chapter 10).

Summarizing the contents thus baldly does not convey the richness of the data and the provocativeness of the argument. The author, who holds the Gagnon chair of fundamental theology at John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Washington, D.C., is also editor of the Anglo-American edition of *Communio*, the review founded by Hans Urs von Balthasar and others who were increasingly disillusioned by rampant 'liberalism' in the aftermath of Vatican II.

At one level, the book contributes to the long-running debate in the United States about the right of the bishops to confer and remove the 'mandate' of those who teach theology in Catholic universities. The Vatican document *Ex corde ecclesiae* (1990) rules out the 'academic freedom' which most American Catholic universities enjoy. For better or worse, this does not affect Catholics who teach theology in British universities.

At another level, however, David Schindler's argument deserves attention. Most of what he says about post-Nietzschean atheism as having nothing to do with the Trinity, about doing theology and being a practising Christian, about contemplation, and about persons-in-relation, is familiar and largely acceptable. The controversial claims come in chapter 9, where he contends that the question of gender affects every central belief and practice of the Catholic Christian faith. Indeed, the questions raised by 'liberal' attitudes to homosexual behaviour and the ordination of women provoke a rethinking of basic Christian doctrines such as has not occurred since the early patristic era. Schindler concedes at the outset that metaphysical explorations of gender, talk of the 'eternal feminine' and suchlike, reek of European Romanticism and run the risk of reviving ancient Mediterranean gnosticism. Insisting on the link between femininity and receptivity, Schindler follows von Balthasar (in this respect once again following Adrienne von Speyr) into conceiving this receptivity as *activity* — not just potentiality and matter, then, as traditionally believed. This brings Schindler to make some pretty exotic Balthasarian assertions. In the triune life of the Godhead, the Father, as the begetting origin-without-origin, is supra-'masculine'; the Son, as begotten and thus receptive, is supra-'feminine'; but then the Father and the Son, as jointly spirating the Spirit, are again supra-'masculine'; which makes the Spirit supra-'feminine'; but finally the Father, being conditioned in turn by this begetting and spirating, has a supra-'feminine' dimension.

Does this introduction of gender into the doctrine of the Trinity do more good than harm? Thomas Aquinas, for one, was wary of such analogies. As regards the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son within the Godhead he dismissed the analogy of Abel, fathered by Adam and born by Eve as 'inappropriate' (*Summa Theologiae* 1a 36, 3 *ad primum*). He was cautious about thinking of the generation of the

Word in terms of 'fleshly generation' (*Summa contra gentiles* book 4, chapter 11); but then he preferred the analogy of language. Gregory of Nyssa regarded 'God' as meaning the joint dynamism of the three persons within the divine life, without needing the masculine/feminine analogies (*Against Eunomius* 2, 34). Rublev's icon might seem an even more satisfactory representation.

However that may be, the Balthasarian insistence on introducing gender into the doctrine of creation has a great deal more practical effect, even at the level of church politics. God's relation as creator to the world is 'masculine'; but in the 'masculine' initiative whereby the world is created, God is also 'womb-like' and therefore 'feminine', immanent, patient, achieving everything through pain. The world, then, is 'feminine' over against, or rather in response to, God as creator. Indeed, just as Karl Barth set his theology of creation in the context of his theology of redemption, von Balthasar and von Speyr see the order of creation as always already implicitly 'Marian'. 'The mother's smile', as Schindler says (page 260), is 'presupposed as the anterior condition of every man's being and action' — 'The condition of a man's being a man is that he be formed within the (natural) *fiat* of his mother' — which gives us 'a kind of analogue in the natural order for the marian *fiat* in the supernatural order'. (No doubt her mother's smile has a similar effect on a daughter.) As a matter of fact, 'the basic embryonic structure of all living beings, including man, is primarily feminine' — 'the subsequent differentiation of the male arises from a tendency towards extreme formulations, while the development of the female shows a persistence in the original balance' (page 256, quoting von Balthasar, in turn quoting Adolf Portmann, the Swiss biologist). In effect, man is not primarily masculine, as feminist theorists say; man has always been primarily *feminine*. A consequence of this recovery of a sense of the anteriority and primacy of the feminine in the call to sanctity in the order of grace (no salvation without Mary's consent) is, of course, that women (and no doubt lay men) should recognize that their vocation lies 'in the motherly act of laboring Christ into birth — in hearing the Word of God, of carrying it, and nurturing it to completion'. In short, the Church as Christ's body, bride and virgin mother, enacts, sacramentally and typologically, the responsiveness of the created order to the honor of the original gift.

What is wrong in our culture, of course, is that values of aggression and exploitation dominate. Why the Church is failing to save our culture from self-destruction is, roughly speaking, that many Catholics, in influential positions, fail to practise the responsiveness of the bride to the Bridegroom, under the prompting of the Spirit. Many others, from Gabriel Marcel and Simone Weil to Martin Heidegger, have attempted analogous critiques of Western culture. Comparisons with their key notions, such as presence, waiting and *gelassenheit* would be in order. David Schindler's Balthasarian project certainly invites such attention.

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