

HORIZONS

The Journal of the College Theology Society

Published at Villanova University

Fall, 1990: Volume 17: Number 2

Book Review by Richard J. Beauchesne of *Living Faith: An Introduction to Theology*, by Eileen P. Flynn and Gloria Blanchfield Thomas. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989. (Pp. 338-339)

P.S. There are two editorial mistakes in the text: p. 338, references (line 7 in text) should read referenced. On p. 339, the (line 9 in text) should read to.

Living Faith: An Introduction to Theology. By Eileen P. Flynn and Gloria Blanchfield Thomas. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989. vi + 429 pages. \$16.95 (paper).

Living Faith: An Introduction to Theology was written "to provide information for [college] students of theology while taking care not to overwhelm or oppress them" (v). The book (whose complete title should read "An Introduction to Catholic Theology") is comprised of twelve references and clearly written chapters—each followed by endnotes, a glossary, discussion questions, and additional readings. 17

Chapters 1 to 8 follow a traditional model of a theology "from above" (God, Faith, Jesus Christ, Revelation and Grace, Scripture, Church, Sacraments, Prayer and Liturgy). The last four chapters (New Perspectives in Theology, Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Sexual Ethics, Facing Death and Finding Freedom) allow for a theology "from below." For the most part, the book is to be recommended for its cosmocentric (rather than exclusive ecclesiocentric) theology and historical accuracy.

Instructors using this book as a text ought to qualify its absolute statements ("The notion of God is fundamental to the study of any religious tradition" [1] or "all exegetes concur that Jesus does actually perform miracles" [81]) and correct retrogressive and literal biblical readings ("On Holy Thursday . . . Jesus' apostles gathered together in the Upper Room . . . [and were instructed by Jesus] to come together in the future to celebrate the mysteries of salvation" [186]). In light of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her* they should also uncover radically androcentric/patriarchal contents of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (130-59).

At times, the authors might be more probing. Some examples: (a) by indicating that the third post Vatican II revised rite of penance—communal rite with

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general absolution (215)—still requires that participants eventually confess privately (to indicate that changes in the “New Reconciliation Rite” remain individualist rather than communal, reformist rather than structural); (b) by situating ministry (171-73)—as well as sacraments, especially orders (193-223), and prayer and liturgy—within the purview of both the priesthood of all believers (219) and worship as life (to uphold the primacy of Christian life over church order); and (c) by stating emphatically and unambiguously that many Catholic women who desire ordination seek, not to join the present male priesthood, but to restructure the latter on the basis of leadership models ~~the~~ promote mutuality rather than domination/submission (173, 220, 252, 281-82). 1.9

Finally, chapter 11 on “Catholic Sexual Ethics” often presents selective methodologies as well as contradictory positions. A case in point: institutional Catholic teaching is exclusively proposed as morally right regarding abortion (354-58), sexual intercourse (360-61), and means against the sexual transmission of AIDS. The all-too-brief treatment of the latter (359-60) concludes that unmarried young couples should be counseled “to await the pleasures experienced by lovers who enjoy sex within the context of committed marital relationships” rather than be educated “to use condoms for causal sex” (3670; cf. also 353-54). Advocating condoms, the chapter states, “reveals a twofold confusion”: “condoms are not foolproof” (359) and their recommendation suggests “that abstinence until marriage is an unreasonable expectation” (360).

In contrast to the above, the traditional Catholic teaching on homosexual genital acts is presented, but then: (a) discusses the views of “[Catholic] revisionist moral theologians” based on theoretical, experiential, and religious “reservations” (364-66); (b) the characterization of “homophobia and tendency to condemn” as ingrained in patriarchal religions and standing in sharp contrast to Jesus’ teachings; and (c) a call for “a rethinking of the moral prohibitions which have traditionally been attached to homosexual acts” (365-66). “Revisionists views” are also hinted at or briefly supplied regarding contraceptives and *in vitro* conception *within* marriage (362-63), and divorced and remarried Catholics (218-19 and 376-77).

All in all, this is a reliable textbook for undergraduate courses particularly focused on the Catholic tradition. Scrupulously faithful to Vatican II theology, it sometimes goes beyond by appealing to recent theological contributions. Its authors are to be congratulated for the immense service they are rendering college professors of Catholic theology.

Emmanuel College

RICHARD J. BEAUCHESNE

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