

Healy associates with this the dangers of spiritualising and universalising what is at the heart of the church, neglecting its concrete and practical contextual manifestations, and eventually identifying the church's task with the humanist project in general. Rahner is the main focus of attention here although Boff and Tillard are also regarded as inclusivist in their ecclesologies. There are interesting arguments in support of the view that the current 'religious' context serves to date important aspects of Rahner's ecclesiology which was developed in a time when the world seemed to be becoming ever more 'secular'.

Healy's alternative proposal for a practical-prophetic ecclesiology involves the development of theological forms of history, sociology and ethnography. He is clear that a simple submission to supposedly secular forms of these disciplines is not adequate for Christian theology: while presenting themselves as 'neutral' and 'objective' such secular accounts imply religious and theological convictions. Not that the community of the church can detach itself completely, as a distinct 'culture', from other communities and traditions. Supported by theological forms of these disciplines, however, Healy's prophetic-practical ecclesiology will be constructive and critical. It will enable the church to be an agent for particularity. It is also likely to be confessional as it appropriates a theological narrative of the concrete identity of the church over time and tries continually to re-orientate itself anew to Jesus Christ. Its assessment will be in terms of how well it fosters truthful witness and faithful discipleship within this particular context.

Clearly ecclesiology is very significantly affected by current intellectual debates about modernism and post-modernism. Healy gathers a wealth of interesting material and offers a coherent and provocative argument. I was surprised that there was no mention of John Henry Newman: the first chapter of his work on the development of Christian doctrine, 'On the Development of Ideas', seems like it might support Healy's desire for 'a theological narrative of the concrete identity of the church over time'. At the very least Newman's account of the 'idea' of Christianity could be said to be dramatic rather than epic in its conception.

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

SENSES OF TRADITION, CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN CATHOLIC FAITH by John E. Thiel, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000*, pp.viii–256, £33.50.

The perennial question that provoked this work has become ever more urgent since Vatican II: How can the required continuity of Tradition in the teaching of the Catholic Church accommodate the shifts and changes that have manifestly taken place? 'However important a hermeneutics of tradition is to a richer appreciation of Revelation, it cannot fail to respect the integrity of Tradition that is the mainstay of Catholic belief' (p.25) This book claims to find an answer by developing a four-fold 'sense' of Tradition analogous to the mediaeval four-fold sense of Scripture.

So the *Introduction* gives a useful summary of the history of scriptural interpretation, and some valuable observations on the formulations by the

Council of Trent and Vatican II of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, before outlining the author's own thesis. To the 'literal' sense of Tradition he adds the senses of 'development-in-continuity', 'dramatic development' and 'incipient development'. Four chapters expound each of these at length, and are followed by two on 'Discerning the senses of Tradition' and 'Tradition and Theology'. The book concludes with very thorough end-note references and sources, and two indices.

The chapter on the literal sense distinguishes this from mere literality, and finds it in the 'plain sense' discerned, held and passed on by communal insight and expressed in all aspects of the Church's on-going life. It has demonstrably changed over time and is shaped by elements of both constancy and renewal; it is a sensibility or shared awareness discerned by the *sensus fidei* inspired by the Holy Spirit. It has often emerged from conflict and sometimes achieved formal definition, e.g. at Chalcedon, and so has a strong tendency to permanence.

The exposition of development-in-continuity includes a useful survey of various 19th. and 20th. century models of development in theology, privileging that of John Henry Newman but claiming to go beyond it: 'This sense fathoms the truth of Tradition as a growth that occurs in a consistent way throughout ecclesial time and space that preserves Tradition's truth while it develops it' (p.57). The author rejects expedients such as the distinction between 'form' and 'content' as inadequate, and emphasises the constant presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in the actual historically conditioned context of the life of the Church.

The description 'dramatic development' refers to the situation in which a long-held position formerly deemed to be a settled element in the traditional teaching of the Church, is in fact abandoned. The examples cited concern slavery, usury, religious freedom and the ecclesial reality of other Christian churches. One factor at work is the *sensus fidei* manifest in the widespread loss of reception of the previous position, but the author also offers a complex, and not wholly convincing presentation of two other criteria for identifying a genuine 'dramatic development' found in the argumentation of theologians and of the Magisterium.

Incipient development is 'an ecclesial sense for the novel' when a minority of the faithful come to believe that an uncustomary belief or practice ... deserves recognition by the Church as its Tradition' (p.129). This is strikingly illustrated by an account of how an initially subordinationist Christology of the 2nd. and 3rd. centuries ultimately gave way to the *homoousios* formulation of Nicea and Chalcedon. Current candidates for incipient development are — predictably — various themes in feminist theology, liberation theology and the ordination of women. The last of these evokes the significant comment that such topics may indeed be open to development since the Magisterium now finds it necessary to support the previously unchallenged position by theological argumentation — which is here subjected to an interesting critique.

The book is somewhat long-winded and repetitive — a trait perhaps inevitable in view of the rather unusual and difficult subject-matter — but it does offer a useful presentation of the specifically Catholic position with

regard to Tradition, and is perhaps more valuable and interesting for the wealth of historical, philosophical and theological material cited and explored in support of the thesis, than for the thesis itself. The so-called 'senses' are not senses in the scriptural mode, of meaning actually contained in the text, but rather epistemological approaches which can yield different interpretations. The work also provides interesting discussions of the nature of time, the historicity of ecclesial experience, the working of the Holy Spirit in the *sensus fidei*, the manner in which the content of Tradition is focussed and 're-configured', the nature and pertinence of infallibility, and the relation between permanency and change, and thus the reliability of Tradition.

Two closing chapters consider the role and responsibility of theologians within the ecclesial community and offer a positive evaluation of a wide spectrum of theological approaches — categorised as narrative, hermeutical and critical, which are seen as complementary rather than conflictual in developing the Church's official Tradition. The small, close print, on off-white paper, and the price, are the least attractive features of the book.

M. CECILY BOULDING OP

ELIZABETH OF SCHONAU: THE COMPLETE WORKS translated and introduced by Anne C. Clark, preface by Barbara Newman, *Classics of Western Spirituality*, Paulist Press, New York, 2000. Pp. 306. \$24.95 pbk.

This volume from the *Classics of Western Spirituality* contains a translation of the complete works of Elizabeth (1129-1165), who was a nun in the German monastery of Schonau for most of her life. It is a most valuable addition to the previous volumes in this series.

The visionaries of the Middle Ages used startling and often incomprehensible images to contain a sense of what they had perceived, and in doing so often blocked rather than conveyed meaning. Elizabeth, the young visionary of the abbey of Schonau, so like them in so many ways, was an exception in this: where they were overwhelmed by whirling abstract images, she saw and spoke with people. Like Hildegard of Bingen, her friend and contemporary, she had been a nun from an early age and, like her also, her visionary life began with physical weakness and suffering which loosened the restraints of normal perception to enable her to speak with the authority of God. Like Hildegard again, she had an amanuensis, in this case her brother, Ekbert, who joined the community at Schonau two years after his sister began her visionary life and who both recorded her visions, consulted with her about their theological meaning and translated anything that was in German into the universal language of Latin. Elizabeth also followed the example of Hildegard and many other visionaries in speaking and writing letters with intense force in criticism of laxity and wrong-doing especially among the clergy.

In two ways, however, Elizabeth was notably different from her contemporary and both these differences are illuminating. First of all, there is the corporate, liturgical context of her visions. The liturgical life of her abbey structured Elizabeth's visions, and the saints commemorated there year by year were the focus of her insight. This affirms the unity of corporate liturgical