

undergone a renaissance; ironically, one product of which is a family of new-style design arguments building on a position which Sharpe himself is keen to maintain, namely, the reality of teleological and intentional explanations. In the US a new alliance of orthodox-minded Catholics, Lutherans and Jews is gaining ground in intellectual circles; and in Paris a million well-educated young people attended Mass celebrated by the unmistakably orthodox and confident John Paul II.

Sharpe's concluding, ill-aimed swipes are all the more imprudent since they are inessential to, and distract from the interesting case presented in the six preceding chapters: Religion and Morality; Worship; Faith and Trust; Love; Sexual Morality; and Immortality. The general form of his argument is as described above, showing that human concerns lose their meaning or are corrupted when relocated in a religious framework. I do not underestimate the care and attention needed to refute Sharp's points. I would say, however, that just as they exhibit the common merit of probing beneath the surface of familiar claims, so they are liable to the same deficiency of not going deep enough. For example, in relation to the idea that God constitutes a *telos* of human activity, Sharpe tends to read this as rendering activity instrumental; but that misses the idea that an end need not be distinct from the activities specified in terms of it, nor should it be thought of as rendering further activity pointless.

In general Sharpe's references to religious sources consist mostly of quoting from hymns and the shorter catechism. I do not criticise either, but I do think that if one is going to launch an attack on a tradition that can lay claim to having produced some of the most profound writings in human history then one is obliged to consider these. Where is the evidence of having considered the teachings of such giants of the spiritual life as Gregory the Great, Thomas à Kempis, Julian of Norwich, François De Sales, John Wesley, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, and so on? And if catechetical works are to be cited why not engage the subtleties of the 690 page *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?

I would encourage readings of this book, but add that one should take care not to be swayed by its evangelical fervour. A good exercise for the religiously-inclined would be to read it and refute it. That exercise is not easy, but once completed it is sure to have deepened and strengthened one's faith.

JOHN HALDANE

LIBERATING CONSCIENCE: Feminist Explorations in Moral Theology by Anne E. Patrick; SCM Press, £14.95.

The thesis of this book is that the modern world is "turning a corner", undergoing a Copernican revolution, in theories of knowledge, that has profound implications for Christian ethics, and that the teaching office of the Catholic Church is in danger of being badly wrong-footed by the change of direction. The author believes that this change, and indeed the Church's eventual adjustment to it, are inescapable, but that much harm may be done in the meantime by the attempts of an authoritarian

Magisterium to ignore the corner and hold Catholic ethical teaching to the previous, and now culturally untenable, line, particularly on questions of sexual ethics. Much good could be done, on the other hand, if the Church were to recognise the inevitability of the change of direction and help people to make sense of it within its own terms and tradition.

All of this may well be true. The author compares the change of direction she sees necessary in current Catholic ethical teaching with the first-century move from Jewish to Gentile Christianity, and the shift in Catholic biblical exegetical methodology from Pius X to Vatican II, both in the end successfully negotiated, though with much anguish at the time. It need not even matter that her description of the new ethical paradigm remains somewhat vague (patriarchy will give way to egalitarianism, legalism to virtue, chastity to sexual relationships based on justice): she herself admits to this, and indeed one would not expect a clear view of it while the transformation is still in progress. Her account merits serious reflection, and her documentation of several cases of Vatican disciplinary high-handedness should give tradition's defenders pause.

It should give them pause, but it is unlikely to do so, and the author cannot escape some blame for this, for the book has some serious flaws. Paramount among these is its whole-hearted espousal of an ecclesiology of goodies and baddies.

This is at its most stark in chapter 3, where we learn of the two competing paradigms of virtue in current Catholic thought, the "patriarchal" and the "egalitarian-feminist". The "patriarchal" paradigm seems by implication to cover the entirety of Church history to date, and is affected by "the other-worldly spirituality, the theological and social patterns of domination and subordination, the misogyny and the body-rejecting dualism characteristic of Western culture." There is no attempt to disentangle the widely different traditions represented here, some incompatible — Platonic and Aristotelian views of body, soul and society, for example — or to recognise the strong and positive female contribution to other-worldly spirituality. The "egalitarian-feminist" paradigm is characterised by respect for all created reality instead of a desire to control, meanwhile, values the body and sees power as "the energy of proper relatedness". Aristotle would have seen all of these as in some sense desirable, as would many male mystics; many working-class, Hispanic, Black and other women, on the other hand, as the author herself half admits, would see such language as a sham on the tongues of privileged white middle-class women, who are themselves far from uninvolved in social patterns of domination and subordination.

In her happier moments, the author nuances these positions and recognises that "concrete reality is always much more complex than theory". This is perhaps not surprising, since one of her tenets is that moral decisions must be alive to the complexity of the real world, and that a multiplicity of voices should always be listened to. But some rather important ones seem to find no place in her composition. It is possible, though you would not guess so from her book, to believe in a moral theology that includes both moral absolutes and a strong emphasis on virtue, and to see value in resolving not to give way to

some evil act whatever the consequences (her cavilling at the canonisation of Marie Clementine Anwarite, who died resisting rape, because many Western women would have seen it as better not to have done so, is extremely ungenerous and distasteful).

Anne Patrick's work is intelligent, broad, thoughtful and courageous. But as long as feminists continue to evade the general human complicity in sinful structures of "domination and subordination", and to speak as though the virtues and vices of being in power only apply to those who actually are in power, and not potentially to every other human being as well, they will never gain the ears either of those who are in power, or of those who are in their power. In the case of Catholic feminists, and "egalitarians" generally, as long as they speak as though there are simply two different and mutually exclusive traditions in the Church, as Anne E. Patrick does, rather than one enormously rich and diverse one which takes in all shades of left and right and in-between, and mixes wheat and tares too closely to divide, they will continue to alienate the very people who have most to learn from them.

SARA DUDLEY EDWARDS OP

Dominican Books

Geoffrey Preston died on 31 March 1977, at the age of forty one. With *God's Way to be Man* (1978) and *Hallowing the Time* (1980), edited from his papers, his style of liturgically based Christian spirituality has proved attractive and durable. Now, with ***Faces of the Church: Meditations on a Mystery and Its Images***, again edited by Aidan Nichols OP, this time with a foreword by Bishop Walter Kasper, one of the most eminent German theologians, we have his most substantial work (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 320 pages, paperback, £14.95). In the twenty years since his death, indeed, it is hard to think of more than half a dozen books by English-speaking Catholics that are as good as this. The first hundred pages deal with the 'primal metaphors' for the Church: *ekklesia*, people of God, brotherhood, temple, flock, kingdom, poor of the Lord, bride of Christ, body of Christ and new creation. The second ninety pages deal with the sacraments as 'discrete and iterative events in the life of the Church, articulations of the various facets of the Christian experience of Jesus within the community which he founded and whose living centre he is' (page 181). The next sixty pages turn to a series of 'privileged moments' in the life of the Church: eucharistic assembly, general council, church buildings, pilgrims, saints, martyrs, John the Baptist, Joseph and finally Mary. The concluding chapters, three of which appeared in this journal in 1987, sum up with a picture of the Church as communion in the triune Godhead. Thoroughly biblical, drawing also on the Fathers, especially Ignatius of Antioch and Augustine, as well as on Thomas Aquinas, with a few key quotations from Vatican II texts, this book is a kind of initiation into the Church's life as the sacramental form of the believer's being incorporated into the divine life. Entirely free of 'progressivism' in the 'spirit' of Vatican II as well as of embittered nostalgia for pre-conciliar practices, *Faces of the Church* cuts through