

The concluding comparison between Origen and Teilhard brings out some important differences and common features. Origen, with his platonic background, emphasizes divine transcendence and tends to link Christ's cosmic role with his divine nature whilst Teilhard, looking at the universe from an evolutionary perspective, links the cosmic Christ more with the human than the divine. Yet within their respective contexts both thinkers aimed at relating Christ as comprehensively as possible to the totality of the universe. Both ran risks but both greatly enriched the Christian tradition through their thought about the cosmic dimension of Christ.

The book is copiously annotated and includes a substantial bibliography as well as an appendix listing the occurrence of the term 'Christ cosmique' in the French original of Teilhard's writings (44 different texts are recorded between 1916 and 1954). The high quality of the historical research presented here is accompanied by a cautious assessment and measured judgment as to its theological significance. This

study is primarily a collection of data, a masterly survey of the ideas surrounding cosmic Christ thinking which systematic theologians need to take up and develop further, using this book as an indispensable basis. Occasionally one might wish that the author of this excellent study had exercised more creative theological imagination himself and used the building materials so carefully assembled here to construct an edifice with them – but Father Lyons could go no further than he did. He tragically died of skin cancer in 1979, at the point of completing the doctoral thesis on which this book is based. We owe an immense debt to his supervisor and editor, Professor Wiles, for having made available the results of this painstaking and important research of many years so that others may benefit from it. All one can wish for now is that the author's final statement that the idea of the cosmic Christ 'cries out for careful and sustained theological development' will be heard and heeded.

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HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE by Edward A Malloy
University Press of America, 1981. pp xv + 365 \$24.00 hardback; Paper \$13.25.

The debate about the moral acceptability of homosexual acts and the homosexual unions of which they are part has continued for a little over ten years in the Christian Churches. It is the author's belief that debates of this type go through three phases. First there is a phase of challenge to the received tradition. Then comes a critical assessment of the challenge. Finally, the debate moves to a synthesis of viewpoints, which need not take the form of a rejection of the original tradition, although it might be modified. He suggests that the debate about homosexuality has run through the first phase. Traditional beliefs have been challenged. It has been variously suggested that homosexual acts can be legitimate in exclusive and permanent relationships, or in semi-exclusive and semi-permanent relationships, or even that Christians might permit themselves numbers of homosexual relationships simultaneously or consecutively. The time has come, he thinks, to assess the challenge critically.

This is, then, another book about the morality of homosexuality. As such, it inevitably covers much ground which has already been covered in other books. Chapters are devoted to the language, history, prevalence and causes of homosexuality; to the social institutions of the homosexual sub-culture; to the civil law; to the scriptures, to the arguments for a change of teaching and to the way the Church should treat homosexual people. Two chapters which are novel for a book on this subject are that on the homosexual way of life and that on the Christian way of life. They are crucial to the book's line of argument and I will comment on them later. The list of contents includes an intriguing chapter entitled 'Homosexuals and the Civil War', but 'War' turns out to be a misprint for 'Law'; just one of many misprints.

Let it be said at once that the author does not agree with the revisionists. He does not accept their arguments for a

change in Church teaching. He probes the arguments and finds them wanting in a number of ways. In this sense the book moves the debate forward. It must also be said that within the limits of space the work is thorough. Although a number of English works have been ignored, he has explored the North American theological literature fully.

Let me outline a few of his conclusions. He favours a multidimensional explanation of why some people are homosexual and suggests that the more immersed an individual is in active homosexual experience, especially as part of the gay sub-culture, the harder it is to change. He does not think there is enough evidence to show that a more accepting attitude by society would encourage homosexual unions to become permanent and exclusive like many heterosexual ones, though it might be so. As regards legislation, he favours the general thrust of the Wolfenden Report. He concludes that the Scriptures are not greatly concerned with the topic of homosexuality, but nevertheless are against homosexual practice, a position which revisionists must overcome and explain away. But he thinks the future debate will be in the area of the values to which the Bible witnesses rather than about texts specifically relating to homosexuality. He thinks that the strongest argument in favour of the traditional prohibition is that based on the ability of heterosexual genital union to symbolize the union of opposites and to express the deepest human yearnings, an ability homosexual unions lack. But he thinks modified natural law arguments also have some merit.

The two key chapters which give the book its title are: 'The Homosexual Way of Life', and the contrasting one on 'The Christian Way of Life'. The author's thesis is that there is a way of life which people enter who come out into the open about their homosexuality. The central claim is that this way of life is 'a pattern of social organisation that takes certain characteristic forms which find a common focus in the ultimate commitment to unrestricted personal sexual freedom' (p 181). He is not suggesting that all homosexuals live

promiscuously or advocate promiscuity, but that it is very hard for advocates of homosexual freedom to agree that any sexual acts, other than the most obviously cruel and exploitative, are immoral.

By contrast, the characteristic features of the Christian way of life in the realm of sexuality are chastity, love and faithfulness to promise. Christian tradition has found that monogamous marriage, singleness and celibacy are apt expressions of this pattern, but homosexual relations are not. Malloy's conclusion is definite: 'I am convinced that the homosexual way of life, as evolved in the social structures and practices of the homosexual sub-culture, is irreconcilable with the Christian way of life' (p 328). He believes that if the demands of the advocates of gay liberation are accepted traditional heterosexual marriage must be replaced by something else.

It is in the nature of the case that the truth of this conclusion is hard to demonstrate, and the author admits that his judgment is impressionistic. An obvious rejoinder would be that he is aiming at a wide target. Should he not have directed his fire at the harder target; the case for exclusive and permanent relationships, after the pattern of heterosexual marriage? But it is doubtful if that is what most advocates of homosexual freedom, even Christians, want. It is not at all clear what precisely advocates of gay liberation are asking the Churches to approve, but it is doubtful if it is an equivalent to heterosexual marriage. Even if it were, its acceptance would require extensive modification of Catholic sexual ethics, for that ethics makes much of the close linking of love-making and life-giving, and of the bridal symbolism in Scripture. To accept anything else, for example impermanent relationships, would require that we totally rewrite sexual ethics and stop requiring life-long marriage. It is unlikely that we can or will do that. The author has made a serious point and it merits careful attention.

In sum, this is a moderate and careful contribution to the debate.

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