

regions and nations in Spain, but Bishop Masnou continuously apologises and this can become tedious. Secondly, in some respects this book appears to be over simplistic. The author is undoubtedly aware of the Catalonian situation, but he underestimates the variety of nations within the Spanish territory. He insists on explaining the Catalonian problem as a conflict between Catalonia and Castile. Finally, he seems to overdo the feeling of victimisation when considering the anti-Catalan syndrome. Without denying the existence of misunderstandings in other nations and regions of Spain about the Catalan reality, defining them as a sort of malaise is excessive and counterproductive.

Despite these minor criticisms, Bishop Masnou should be congratulated. The simplicity of his style is to be praised, and his book can be recommended to all those with an interest in nationalism, Catalonia, Spain or Catholic social teaching.

JAVIER OLIVA

IMAGES OF REDEMPTION: ART, LITERATURE AND SALVATION by Patrick Sherry, *T&T Clark, Continuum, London, 2003, Pp. viii + 213, £16.99 pbk.*

Those who have learned their soteriology from the writings of F.W. Dillistone and the late Colin Gunton will find here a companion guide useful for teachers and students alike. Chapter Two especially, 'What is Redemption?', is a clever distillation of recent thinking in the English-speaking world on 'atonement' that incorporates insights from Eastern Orthodoxy and continental Catholicism without compromising the complexity and ambiguity of the doctrine. Although the average person might feel daunted by Sherry's ease of movement between *Antigone*, Flemish painting, and twentieth-century Roman Catholic novelists (to scratch only the surface) the soteriological concepts he clarifies and presents are ready to hand for the active reader. Where one's own knowledge is less wide-ranging than Sherry's, either in scholarship or in the arts, he defines terms and causes the reader to draw upon more familiar experiences of the arts, thus expanding the dialogue and creating an author-reader exchange of interpretations.

The principal argument of *Images of Redemption* is that art and literature can act as 'primary expressions' of religious ideas and doctrines (cf. Chapters One and Nine). What this means is that the 'arts' are often able to 'show' us what religious ideas look like. When they do so, they inhere in our imaginations with a somewhat autochthonous primacy and it is possible, Sherry suggests, that doctrines and ideas are formed from a backward glance at our artistic and

literary experiences. This is not to say that the arts do not often 'illustrate' or depict ideas and doctrines, or that thinkers expounding upon ideas and doctrines cannot criticise the arts in what they 'show'. Rather, Sherry is arguing that our experiences of the arts form our life and perceptions: a 'primary expression' adds depth to discursive knowledge through experience, whereas an 'illustration' is more of a confirmation through experience of what is already discursively known. Stated in another way, art and literature do not 'argue' or prove theories, but that they show forth, analogously to God's self-revelation, life in a new light (184). Since there are many art forms that 'show' the world in different lights, one ought to be confronted with the question: 'who has seen life more fully and deeply, and portrayed it more convincingly (184)?'

In the case of 'arts of redemption' (a phrase borrowed from John W. Dixon's *Nature and Grace in Art*), the 'artist is occupied with the redemptive act itself or the kind of world that results from the transfiguration of creation in redemption' (Dixon, 72; Sherry, 4). Such art is an implicit critique of Nietzsche's quip that Christians 'do not look redeemed' (3, 38, 81) as well as Martin Buber's statement that 'to the Jew the Christian is the incomprehensibly daring man, who affirms in an unredeemed world that its redemption has been accomplished' (39). Art, in other words, ought to help us to 'see' the possibilities of redemption in the here and now, either through the example of transfigured characters or in subtle intimations of grace, and call us to action in a manner analogous to theologies of liberation.

Sherry uses von Balthasar's notion of 'drama' (Chapter Three) as an organising principle for *Images of Redemption*. He notes that 'redemption is a process which is worked out over a period of time' (13) and thus privileges the notion of 'drama' because it is the broadest term available for encompassing the arts that involve the depiction of change across time (narrative). The book, in fact, is broken up into 'a drama with three Acts, which are interlinked, namely salvation history, present human life, and the life to come' (49). These Acts are bracketed by Sherry's conceptual clarifications and the development of his arguments. The bulk of *Images of Redemption* is thus devoted to demonstrations of these Acts in various arts and literature. It is most heavily weighted towards 'present human life', and thus 'narrative' arts such as drama, novels and film, receive the greatest attention, due in no small part to our resonance with the depiction of characters groping after grace: we sympathise with Mauriac when he says that 'it is easier to find the 'primitive flame' that still exists in the worst characters than to depict virtuous ones' (117).

Images of Redemption ends with two chapters further distinguishing between 'illustration' and 'primary expression' summarised

above. In the end, this distinction is directed at artists and theologians as a principle for dialogue and mutual critique. Patrick Sherry is calling us, in a manner reminiscent of his intellectual mentor Wittgenstein, to reconsider the primacy that lived life and experience, albeit aesthetic experience, have in our processes of thought. It is when we attend to our own deep-seated images of redemption that the arts reveal their critical potential and open the door of dialogue onto a wider horizon of human experience.

CYRUS P. OLSEN III

GOD AND CAESAR: Personal Reflections on Politics and Religion by Shirley Williams, *Continuum*, 2003, Pp. 147, £12.99, hbk

Those who maintain that politics should pursue the common good find it extraordinary that in recent times politicians have regularly denied that ethics has any role to play in politics. In 1997 a British Foreign Secretary (Robin Cook) finally grasped the nettle and announced that Britain would henceforth implement foreign policy 'with an ethical dimension'. Baroness Shirley Williams of Crosby, who considers herself both a cradle Catholic and a convert, recognizes that politics is 'bound up with the making of moral choices' and requires also a religious foundation. In *God and Caesar* she offers a series of reflections about politics, public life and the Catholic Church.

Christian thinkers who contribute to political theology rarely have political experience on which to draw. If a political theology is to be worthy of serious consideration it must draw too on political experience. Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords and Professor Emeritus at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Baroness Williams has a wealth of experience on which to draw both in the practice of politics and in the teaching of political science. She was part of the Labour Cabinet from 1974 to 1979, and has served as Secretary of State for Education and Science, and Paymaster-General (1976–79). In 1981 she was co-founder of the SDP.

In eight brief and lively chapters spiced with autobiographical detail the author discusses the role that Christianity has to play in society today. She begins by discussing the secularization of modern society and the decline and privatization of religion. While this presents a challenge to believers the modern world is faced with the same choice between doing good or evil and the Gospel provides us with 'the basis for that moral choice'. Deference to hierarchy based on social or family relationships is dying and this has weakened both political and ecclesiastical authority. There is a need for good men