

CATHOLIC EDUCATION: DISTINCTIVE and INCLUSIVE by John Sullivan *Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2001. Pp. 248, £59.00 hbk.*

This book grasps all the nettles in the debate on Catholic Education, or, indeed, denominational education in general. It is not a complacent affirmation of Catholic schools, encouraging and reassuring. In a most challenging and detailed analysis of the concepts of distinctiveness and inclusiveness, John Sullivan has provided those involved in Catholic education with a framework within which to examine what exactly we claim to be about, as well as the incentive to be up and doing about it. For those not convinced of the value of denominational schooling, this book will be equally challenging.

The structure of the book is helpful, in the listing at the beginning of each chapter of the areas to be discussed and a summary of these at the end. The first chapter ends with 'Angles of Approach', a brief comment on each of the remaining chapters. The final chapter succinctly summarises the main themes. Useful notes are provided at the end of each chapter and there is an impressive and comprehensive bibliography, as well as a clear index. In the Table of Contents section headings are listed.

The recurring theme throughout the book is what the author refers to as the polarities of distinctiveness and inclusiveness and the creative tension required to reconcile these apparently conflicting imperatives, which 'offer a useful interpretative key to the nature of Catholicism'. One chapter is given specifically to explaining and broadening our perceptions of them within the context of Catholic education, and each chapter examines an aspect of one or other or both in establishing the author's claim that there is compatibility. The traditional attitudes associated with conservatives and progressives are shown to be equally unhelpful in this debate.

The reiteration of the fundamentals of Catholic education, as found in various Church documents in the twentieth century, provides a consistent reminder that Catholic education has not come out of a vacuum. Catholic education as a synthesis of faith and culture, experienced in a school that is 'enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity' is presented throughout the book in terms of a living tradition. An ideal of education, with Christ at the centre, that attracts and challenges is put forward without apology. There is no attempt to avoid the criticisms frequently made about faith schools in general and Catholic schools in particular. These are dealt with by spelling out the difficulties and suggesting appropriate action in a calmly constructive way.

The ideals and the realities of today's educational world are articulated, side by side. The problems of reconciling the system within which all schools must work if they are to be acceptable educational institutions, with the principles which form the infrastructure of the Catholic educational system are clearly stated. The place of the Catholic school, not just as part of society, but as an essential contributor at each stage of development and change in the world in which we live, is spelt out. Areas of continuing concern to all

those involved in education, such as admissions criteria, staff appointments, the compulsory curriculum and performance tables of schools are addressed with realism. The dangers inherent in what is described as 'managerialism' are faced, as being incompatible with the inclusiveness that is proposed.

It is perhaps unfair to single out individual chapters as of special interest, but Chapter 4, 'Distinctive Components of Catholic Education' and Chapter 7, 'Living Tradition', are particularly rich in providing substantial material for study. Yes, the vision presented is the ideal, and there is no claim that all schools live up to this. The possibility of doing so, however, is put before us without hesitation. The concept of living tradition permeates the book, and is here presented mainly against the background of the work of Maurice Blondel. Blondel's comments on living tradition provide material for staff development and Governor awareness that is invaluable. Blondel's writings may belong to the first half of the twentieth century, but they are refreshingly relevant to the needs of schools today.

Among the distinctive components of Catholic education, the concept of 'interconnectedness' is given a substantial place. In this regard Chesterton is quoted: 'every education teaches a philosophy; if not by dogma then by suggestion, by implication, by atmosphere. Every part of that education has a connection with every other part. If it does not all combine to convey some general view of life, it is not education at all'. This supports the vision of education as bringing together all that is best in both the sacred and the secular.

The local scene in England and Wales is given a complete chapter, giving useful statistics and highlighting situations which are probably very much those of other countries where concern for Catholic and other faith schools is equally an issue, and is therefore of wide appeal.

The broad, sweeping vision of the possibilities inherent in Catholic education provided here make this book a most timely and valuable addition to educational literature. Providing an analysis of educational philosophy, it is refreshingly free of educational jargon. It is a volume for serious study, after which individual sections will have appeal for particular needs. Its use as a tool for staff development has already been mentioned, an area for which there are too few resources which are both practical and visionary. Principals and Governors in schools and in Colleges providing initial teacher training will find it not just useful, but essential—and very challenging.

LUCINA MONTAGUE OP

FAITH BEYOND RESENTMENT: FRAGMENTS CATHOLIC AND GAY
by James Alison *Darton Longman & Todd, London, 2001, Pp. xv + 239, £10.95 pbk.*

This book makes a particularly significant contribution to the Church's debate on homosexuality, because James Alison chooses not to dwell solely on the most divisive issues but attempts, as the title suggests, to move beyond areas of personal bitterness. It is perhaps inevitable that this attempt is not entirely successful, given the very real sense of rejection