

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

experienced by the author and a number of his friends at the hands of various Church authorities. Yet, the many insights provided by the book are remarkable for the way in which Alison considers and tries to understand all sides of the argument, often through illuminating interpretations of biblical texts.

The book consists of two parts, the first devoted mostly to biblical readings, the second concerned with a number of more contemporary issues and events. Alison's selection of biblical texts is at all times interesting. His choice not to discuss the well-known passages which deal with homosexuality seems to me to be the right one, as they have been analysed very successfully elsewhere, no more so than in Gareth Moore's recently reissued *The Body in Context* (London, Continuum 2001).

The interpretation which Alison gives of John 9, for example, is subtle and illuminating in the way that he questions what it means to be included and excluded and the way in which he counsels the need to 'identify with the two positions at the same time'. The temptation must have been great in a work of undoubted polemical intent to oversimplify issues, and this Alison resolutely refuses to do. The second section of the book contains more specific examples of people and thinkers whom Alison has encountered, ending with a poetic reimagining of the Nicodemus story.

The fact that the majority of the chapters originated as talks given in very different contexts accounts for one of the strengths of the book, the immediacy and vividness of Alison's writing. However, this strength is inevitably accompanied by a number of weaknesses, because the chapters appear not to have been significantly altered from their original state. Sentences beginning with 'Well' and 'Now', and even 'Well now', have little impact on the printed page. More seriously, given the evidently varied audiences who listened to the talks, it is difficult to pin down exactly what kind of reader the book is intended for. It is not sufficient to be told that the book addresses 'people of whatever background negotiating the world of faith in the time of the collapsing closet', when at one moment Alison writes that 'I am very conscious that I am from a culture, race, background, and history that is strange to most of you' and when at the next he refers to 'the voices of hatred which form us as gay people'.

However, these quibbles should not belittle the intelligent insights which Alison provides, and the sensitive and unsensational way in which he confronts issues which so many Church authorities try to ignore. Alison explains in his introduction his choice of the word 'fragments' in the title, emphasising the sense of 'things broken'. I would prefer the sense of fragments as open-ended, because Alison's reflections lead in many fruitful directions, never closing off the potential for future dialogue.

NICHOLAS HAMMOND