

alternative (and less revisionary) repair (or repristination) of Chalcedon through a thicker ontology of personhood.

McCormack is sanguine about the reception of his proposal by Catholics. Certainly, formal objections will oppose his distinctively Protestant willingness to revise dogmatic definitions; material objections cluster around his reconstrual of divine simplicity. Nonetheless, if Balthasar's trinitarianism can be assimilated into the Catholic *Denkform*, why not McCormack's kenoticism? (The latter, of course, will prove more resistant to the metaphysical prophylaxis necessary to assimilate the former). Those who balk at such an undertaking will have more to worry about in the remaining volumes of McCormack's trilogy, but to think (provocatively) with McCormack beyond McCormack, is kenoticism as ontological receptivity not, *prima facie*, more Chalcedon-consistent than Balthasar's abjected Christ of the *Descensus*?

I was a neophyte theologian in St Andrews when McCormack presented the *Urtext* of this book there. Much has evolved in McCormack's thought since then. At the time, there seemed to be only two theological shows in town: Barth and/or Aquinas. My unformed intuition was that the extent to which these were basically opposed ('or') or two complementary orientations ('and') depended upon the extent to which Barth's category of *Entsprechung* ('correspondence') could be read in terms of analogy. If McCormack's dialectical reading of *Entsprechung* as 'ontological receptivity' is the only Barth-consistent reading (a claim he does not make directly), it signals an insuperable divide. So perhaps McCormack's trilogy will unwittingly convince me that there is only one trajectory still viable. Either way, McCormack's first volume is as exciting as it is brilliant; his trilogy will demand sustained ecumenical engagement.

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COUNSELS OF IMPERFECTION: THINKING THROUGH CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING by Edward Hadas, *Catholic University of America Press*, Washington DC, 2021, pp. vii + 434, £28.99, pbk

The title is revealing. Hadas treats Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as offering not changeless commands but guidance with which to navigate a far from perfect world. Its counsels are imperfect, or incomplete, for at least three reasons: human beings are beset by sin and weakness; complex social situations regularly involve balancing competing goods; the human world is shaped by the flow of history. Hadas is especially good at illuminating ambiguities, beginning with the basic premise of Christian anthropology, that we are good *and* sinful *and* (potentially or actually) redeemed.

This is one of ten ‘key ideas’ underpinning CST, some broadly anthropological - e.g. our sociability, need for authority, call to a life of grace - and some relating to its contingently historical nature. Idea 8 is intriguing: ‘Catholics have responded to modernity, but not very successfully’. Hadas sees the essential values of modernity as ‘nurtured in the decline and division of Christendom’, and CST, beginning with *Rerum Novarum*, as primarily a response to these values. He argues that until the 1960s the Church was too reluctant to welcome them, while since then it has erred on the side of generosity. ‘The gushing enthusiasm for modern thinking is as cringeworthy as the previous blind resistance’, he comments (p.32), but continues, ‘the Church has done the world a great favour in expressing the timeless truth in modern language and in offering practical counsel to troubled modern people’. The irony is that by the time the Church had moved in its social teaching from ‘frightened pride to confident humility’ (to quote a sub-title from the final chapter), and thus began to welcome open dialogue with the secular world, contemporary intellectuals had for the most part abandoned any interest in religious ideas.

The central chapters cover economic issues and ideas, government and war, the care of creation and integral ecology, and the family. Hadas brings out the radicality of the Church’s teaching, for example, on care for the poor, on peace and on migration. He also makes clear the ways in which CST integrates ideas that are commonly opposed in public discourse, often illuminating neglected elements in the process. An important theme for him is subsidiarity, found ‘wherever the smaller is supported by the larger’ (p. 83). This has been consistently promoted by papal teaching, which despite its appreciation of the achievements of the welfare state also regularly warns against its limitations. Hadas emphasises such limitations via reflection on Hegel; indeed, throughout the book, he shows how CST can be fruitfully read as a response to both Hegel’s idea of the total state and, conversely, Locke’s individualism.

A vital element in social subsidiarity is, of course, the family. Hadas offers a courageous, nuanced, and historically sensitive exploration of the way in which Catholic teaching has responded to changes such as the greater emancipation of women, the more personal and less social understanding of matrimony, and the loosening of parental and wider family structures. Recognising the difficulty of defending the fundamentals of the Church’s understanding of marriage to a modern audience, he uses the device of an imaginary conversation with a stranger. The point is well made: all such dialogues need to be respectful of their specific interlocutor. The chapter concludes by arguing that teaching on the family can be seen as ‘the core and culmination’ of CST, and that despite its lack of popularity it offers hope above all as a ‘visible example’ of concrete love (pp. 374–5).

The balancing of competing goods means that the genuine radicalism of CST must be tempered with realism; for example, neither a radical union nor a radical separation between Church and state works well, nor does a muddled mix between the two. Consequently, Christians may endorse a

wide range of Church-state relationships, but always with a prudent alertness to their imperfections. Social as well as political life is shot through with ambiguity, as Hadas shows well for the interconnected trio of technology, production and profit; in this context, he develops from *Caritas in Veritate* the idea of an economy of gift. Again, he holds together positions that are unfamiliar bedfellows, insisting on the importance of a healthy ethical capitalism precisely for supporting the very poor.

For all his enthusiasm for the wisdom of CST, Hadas is cautious about claiming for it any success. It would be hard to prove precise channels of influence, but one might argue in response that our traditions of healthcare and education, as well as social regulation such as the minimum wage, owe a great deal to practical Catholics and other Christians influenced in some way by authoritative teaching.

One papal document which has indeed had practical effects, both within the Church and more widely, is *Laudato Si'*. Hadas, while generally appreciative, suggests that the Pope has been too quick to accept a pessimistic view of pollution, specifically the emissions which cause climate change. He suggests, with more optimism than evidence, that technological and economic ingenuity will sort this out. If he were to take carbon emissions more seriously, he might find the beginnings of an answer to one of his perceptive questions: what are the appropriate ethical limits to consumption? That issue aside, the Church, as he rightly argues, has distinctive and rich theological reasons for concern about our damaging of the natural world. *Laudato Si'* is, of course, about much more than climate change; Hadas himself, for example, develops well its concern about the degradation of much contemporary urban life.

The book's sub-title, *Thinking through Catholic Social Teaching* is as revealing as its title. Hadas is both deeply respectful of the authoritative wisdom of this tradition and unafraid to criticise its failures (most sharply in the case of its belated repentance of hostility to the Jews) or to suggest where it needs to be developed or rebalanced. Indeed, a tradition that grows precisely by responding continually to 'new things' in the secular world requires a reflective and independent laity to mediate between the minds of the world and of the Church's leaders. This engaging volume invites the reader to become part of that dialogue.

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