

contrary to received Catholic morality. This is not to say that all the arguments are equal: it is, for example, carefully pointed out that those who propose no legislation to control abortion, because of the freedom necessary in a pluralist State, in fact lose all sight of the fetus as even a possible human person.

We have then a book that is a mine of information and sources, a most valuable educational tool for assessing arguments and evidence, and learning just how difficult this debate is. It underlines the surprising degree to which theological dissent is founded on tradition, the essential need for freedom of discussion in order to understand arguments and evidence, and present a reasoning acceptable to a secular State lacking a single ethic. In such a context a use of language that is merely emotive and acrimonious deserves to have its users described as no more than sectarian, and therefore promotes its opposing cause. The defence of life is something about which we must feel highly emotional, but, because it is so important, we are all the more called to discipline in the way we speak and argue. Fr. Lotstra's book is a pattern for this right defence.

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FOUNDATIONS FOR A SOCIAL THEOLOGY by Dermot A. Lane. *Gill & Macmillan, 1984*

For all the divergences within human culture, as this author sees it, everyone is united in a common search for healing and wholeness; he aims to show that Christianity has within it something which contributes significantly to this quest. He wishes also to provide a corrective to those earlier conceptions of Christianity which saw it as more or less exclusively an individual rather than a social affair; insisting, very properly, that "'personal" sin is tied up with structural sin and ... the salvation of "my" soul takes place only in reference to the salvation of others'. This is what makes his theology a social one.

Every chapter-heading contains the word 'praxis', itself surely a sufficient indication, if any were needed, that the book is up-to-date. A description of the move to praxis in recent theology, particularly as exemplified in the work of J.B. Metz, is succeeded by a discussion of the philosophical background of the notion in the works of Marx and of the Frankfurt school of critical theorists, especially Habermas. This last is commended, I believe rightly, for the sharp distinction which he draws between technical and practical reason, and for his pointing-out of the dangers that issue from a confusion of the two. After showing how social analysis must be an essential element in a theory inspiring praxis, the author turns to a grounding of praxis in Christology, and an account of the teaching of the Catholic Church on the subject since the Second Vatican Council. The 'new praxis' implicit in the mission of Jesus, 'based on the vision of the Kingdom of God', is 'normative for the Church today'.

A final chapter relates the foregoing considerations to the Eucharist. 'The sacramental life of the Church builds up the Christian community. 'At the same time' it 'has a fundamental missionary thrust to it which includes the ethical task of liberating action for justice in our world'.

The book as a whole provides a useful survey of some recent trends in theology. I am not sure that someone who feared that intellectual rigour in Catholic thought has tended to be eclipsed in the last two decades by modish triviality would find much to reassure her. But the clearer commitment to work for justice and peace on earth is obviously to be welcomed.

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