

He believes that 'the metaphysical impulse' can be 'renewed by a reintegration into its scriptural and liturgical sources'. And indeed, he acknowledges that his whole book is in one sense an extended exegesis of Exodus 3:14.

At every point Davies retains an assured grasp of how the matters he is discussing relate to the life and witness of Christian believers in the Church. It is ethically and religiously a deeply serious and challenging book, written by one who (like Paul and Silas, singing, praying, and turning compassionately to their neighbour) listens to the divine speech and joins in with the conversation. Like them, he holds out a model of human existence that is 'exuberantly self-possessing . . . , foundationally reciprocal, and inhabiting a space which is co-gifted by and with the other'.

BEN QUASH

ABORTION AND MARTYRDOM. *The Papers of the Solesmes Consultation and an Appeal to the Catholic Church*, edited by Aidan Nichols OP, *Gracewing, Leominster, 2002 Pp. viii + 164 pbk.*

With admirable economy of introduction and comment, this book presents the papers of a group of theologians, including three laymen and one woman, who met at Solesmes in 1999, to assess the claim of the Divine Innocents movement, that all babies killed by abortion should be regarded as martyrs like the Holy Innocents.

These papers bring back, in a new perspective, the topic of the salvation of the unbaptised, which saw a spate of books in the 1970s. They first raise the question: what is a martyr? Can unborn children not yet capable of an act of free will be said to die by witnessing to Christ or a truth of the Faith? The truth of the fifth commandment is mentioned. As the Holy Innocents are honoured as martyrs, although not old enough to profess their faith, might not all children who are slain in the womb likewise be proclaimed by the Church to be martyrs? Or are there some decisive differences between most, if not all, cases of abortion and the Holy Innocents?

Two differences come to mind. The Holy Innocents were slain *directly* in hatred of Christ, and it could be said that they were baptised as they were circumcised. But it seems altogether too much for the Church to claim as her own children *all* those killed by abortion, when the parents of the great majority are of other religions or have no belief in God. Here not even the faith of the parents will stand for the faith of the children. It is not clear that all abortions are carried out *in odio Christi*; reasons for abortions are quite various, as several contributors to this volume note. But could it not be said that taking the life of an innocent baby in the womb is directed against Christ, the innocent Lamb and the Life himself? Since every human being is made in the image of God, does not everyone responsible for an abortion strike against God, so that the victim witnesses to the truth?

Appeal is made to two texts: 'Whoever welcomes a little child in my name', and 'Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these you did it to me' (Mt 18:5 and 25:40). But it is significant for this question that Jesus added 'in my name' to the first of these two texts. If every baby killed by abortion witnesses to Christ, then why not regard all innocent victims of violence and of other kinds of infanticide as martyrs (those exposed by the Spartans to die on the hillsides)? A few contributors say that surely God would not prejudice children eternally just because they were deprived of life before an offer of salvation could be made to them? Similarly, as every child is a gift from God, surely God would not reject his own gift by refusing salvation to the unborn who die before they can be baptised? Professor Biju-Duval of the Lateran university, however, fears that the claim will altogether weaken the notion of a martyr.

These are just some of the questions and considerations raised by the nine papers of this book. It opens with two long papers which mount a substantial argument in favour. Then come the objections, first from Biju-Duval and the Premonstratensian, Hugh Barbour. Both point out that there is not yet any certainty about when the human soul is infused. Perhaps the best paper is by the Salvatorian, Brian Harrison, who first puts strongly objections before concluding in favour. Only Dom Philippe Jobert's paper is a series of statements rather than an *argument*.

In contrast with the width of some of the claims made for regarding all aborted babies as martyrs comes the very limited request of the Agreed Statement, which says that the Church can *in individual cases* declare unborn children as martyrs. It also acknowledges that a favourable answer will depend on the Church knowing 'beyond doubt' that any given foetus is animated by a rational soul. Only six of the ten participants signed the Agreed Statement. It appears that the others abstained because it did not go far enough. One, Dom Jobert, put out his own final statement that to admit only individual cases would miss the whole point of God's will of universal *salvation*, on which he rests his own plea.

These papers, of a uniformly high quality, will deepen the reader's understanding of related questions: martyrdom, salvation of the unbaptised, the value of human beings in the image of God. As Biju-Duval notes, devotion usually *precedes* discussion of such questions. Devotion to victims of abortions as martyrs now in glory will first need to become more widespread before the Church can accede to the appeal of this book.

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