

mess, a cruel joke. It can make us feel that our faith is madness, or perhaps even a lie, and just because we may be able to see the hand of God at work today things might not seem so clear tomorrow. But when things seem like that, when no answers come, try to remember Jesus at the very end of his earthly life: Jesus on the cross. There he had nothing clever to say, no satisfactory explanations. The gospel writers tell us that before he died one of the things that he said was 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.' (Jn 2:19) But it wasn't from the cross that he said it. There were people at the crucifixion who remembered what he said and threw the words back in Jesus' face. What he did say from the cross was, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' The Father has not forsaken any of us, but it can seem like that sometimes.

Sacraments are ways God has to show us how much he loves us, and with them we celebrate birth, growing up, eating and drinking, coping with illness, falling in love, living in the Church, and death. In the sacraments we do not pretend that life is other than it is: a mixture of joy and pains, things that have no easy answers or perhaps no answer at all. But by Christ's death and resurrection we are brought to a new life with God, we are healed and made human, fit to love each other and God. When Osmund was dying he wrote this:

At fifty-seven I cannot know whether I shall live or die, but our hope is that we shall live, really live before we die and live again after we die. There is only life on either side of death, and life is always sheltered under the providence of God.

Reviews

NEW LAW AND LIFE: 60 PRACTICAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE NEW CODE OF CANON LAW edited by E. Rinere. *Canon Law Society of America*, Washington DC. 1986. Pp.vii + 103. No price given

MARRIAGE STUDIES III, edited by T.P. Doyle. *Canon Law Society of America*, Washington DC. 1986. Pp.ix + 208. \$4.50.

As one scholar put it, 'casuistry' in modern English is a dirty word. It means whatever is sneaky, devious and jesuitical, 'jesuitical' meaning whatever is sneaky, devious and casuistic. This view, a prejudice really, dismisses too much of value in our tradition, and in fact there is a modest resurgence of the question-and-answer method, an ally of casuistry. Under review is a set of sixty questions answered by a team of canon lawyers, originally in a newspaper column carried by nearly thirty Catholic papers in the United States.

The questions are arranged in sections, covering sacraments and sacred rites, marriage and annulment, Catholic people and practice and finally Church structures and operations. Most of the questions are asked frequently enough: can women be altar

servers? Can Catholics be cremated? Do children have to go to confession before their First Communion? Are Roman Catholics allowed to be members of Masonic organisations? Can only priests and deacons preach in church? The explanations are clear, and generally reliable enough although some points should have been revised for republication. The concept of mortal sin is not in the 1983 Code and when used to answer question 13 needs to be explained; in forecasting the duration of an annulment case one should quote canon 1453, requiring that at first instance cases are not to last beyond a year; and canon 221 does not quite say that Christians can legitimately vindicate and defend their rights in the Church. It grants less. If this last answer was too optimistic, that to question 47 is too bleak. We are told that certain excommunicated persons are to be physically excluded from liturgical celebrations or those are to cease until such persons leave. But canon 1331 only affects *ministerial* participation, and in any event does not apply if a serious cause intervenes. The answer about Catholics belonging to the Masons ignores the 1983 declaration that such Catholics are in grave sin and cannot receive Holy Communion.

The above collection was sponsored by the Canon Law Society of America. The Society has also produced its third *Marriage Studies*, a collection of seven essays. Regrettably these reflections on canon law and theology can only be summarised here. T. Mackin concludes that Ephesians 5 does not provide the premisses for the doctrine that the marriage of two baptised Christians cannot end short of death once it is consummated, whilst R.J. Smith explores the status of mixed marriages in the Corinthian community. T.P. Doyle examines the moral inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of sexual intercourse. P.C. Glick studies divorce, marriage and living arrangements in the United States. J.R. Connery looks at the role of love in Christian marriage. R.C. Finn draws some general conclusions from a historical study of the increasingly debated question of faith and the sacrament of marriage. T. Rincon's subtle and impressive study of the doctrinal implications of civil marriage between Catholics (originally in a Spanish review) is a good foil to Finn's essay.

Whether in the detailed formulation of practical answers or in the larger discourse of the essays, The Canon Law Society of America shows an exemplary ecclesial involvement and keeps canon law firmly theological.

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BACKWARD INTO LIGHT: THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS ACCORDING TO MATTHEW AND MARK by J.L. Houlden. *SCM Press. 1987*
Pp. x + 84. £3.95

There are two ways of introducing readers of the Gospels to modern scholarship. One is to describe the various skills needed and the history of their application to these documents of late antiquity. The other is to assume that the readers already know something about critical scholarship, and to work a few examples through. Since Mr Houlden was giving Holy Week lectures at a theological college, he chose the second method, using his examples not simply to display the critical exegete at work but also to consider how that work affects the life of faith and prayer.

The first two chapters and the epilogue rather anxiously raise the question of post-critical spirituality. 'Supposing prayer set great store by the virginity of Mary, then might the exegetical study, in the name of truth, give a licking to the truth already valued? Supposing prayer set great store by the Risen Christ and study of the origins of the idea left it dim and unsure, might not the licking be intolerable. How many such assaults could prayer survive? Might prayer even die?' He presents the case, and offers an answer. It really amounts to this: not that faith can be maintained despite critical doubt, but that the nature of faith is clearer and support for faith is firmer when the Gospels are critically studied.

The three middle chapters of the book put the passion stories of Mark and Matthew