

- Hanesyddol?', *Dwned*, I (1995), 63–5.
- 50 In the case of Ireland, it is known that pupils were assigned their tasks at night-time to be completed after a day's work by the following night, Williams, *The Irish Literary Tradition*, pp. 161–2..
- 51 Gerard Sitwell O.S.B. from a letter dated 1967 to Mrs. C.M. Daniel, Bangor.
- 52 Saunders Lewis, 'Pwyll y Pader o Ddull Hu Sant', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, II, part 4 (1925), 288.
- 53 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 127.
- 54 *Loc. cit.*
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp. 137–9.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 140.
- 58 See *A Medieval Welsh Mystical Treatise*, pp. 25–7.
- 59 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–31.

Reviews

EMBODYING FORGIVENESS. A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS by L. Gregory Jones *William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, XIX + 313 pp, \$28 (hb), \$18 (pb).*

Although forgiveness is a central theme of Christian faith and practice there are surprisingly few theological analyses of it. This recent work of L.Gregory Jones is therefore very welcome.

The 'therapeutic' tendency in modernity, he says, trivialises forgiveness and makes it seem easy. It distorts the grammar of Christian forgiveness by offering people pale imitations of the Christian notions of community, sin and compassion. An opposing modern tendency regards forgiveness as too difficult, ineffective in responding to injustice, perhaps simply impossible. Faced with the cycles and patterns of sin which can dominate the lives of individuals and communities, what power has forgiveness? Nietzsche dismissed it as an immoral glorification of weakness.

Bonhoeffer presides in the first part of the book. He resisted the false light of 'therapeutic forgiveness' and the darkness of violence and oppression. His struggles illustrate how forgiveness costs, a truth most clearly seen in the death of Jesus in which the disciples are called to share. For Bonhoeffer grace cannot come cheap, there is no grace without judgement, forgiveness and repentance must go together. For Jones the witness of Maximilian Kolbe shows how forgiveness may be

embodied in such a way that the cycle of violence and counter-violence is broken.

'The world in which pardon is all-powerful becomes inhuman', says Levinas. Jones responds to this by arguing that an adequate account of forgiveness requires a Trinitarian identification of God. The costly forgiveness of God in Jesus is the pardon which is all-powerful. Christians receive this forgiveness and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are to embody it in their lives by unlearning habits of sin and by learning to become holy. For his soteriology Jones draws heavily on Barth, Rowan Williams and Balthasar. Jesus emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, in order to draw that slave into the life of divine communion, while embodying for us the shape of human communion. With Jesus forgiveness precedes repentance although repentance becomes an indispensable component of the habit of forgiveness. God's forgiveness is a judgement of grace appropriated through repentance. Jesus crucified and risen is the just Judge and the pure Victim, a new reality which ends the cycle of judgement. Because of Jesus we hope for a more human world in which forgiveness and reconciliation may be sought.

The Spirit brings people to holiness through specific habits and practices, ensuring that the forgiveness of God takes transforming effect in particular lives. Jones applies Aristotelian virtue-theory to the theme of forgiveness speaking of it as a craft, a practice (in MacIntyre's sense) or a way of living. But the teacher and exemplar of this craft is the Trinitarian God. Too easily people think the invitation to forgive is an invitation to forget. Not so, says Jones. It is an invitation to remember, to remember well, to remember more, to remember truthfully.

The practice of forgiveness is closely related to other practices among which Jones includes the sacraments. This is the weakest part of this book theologically: the sacraments as he speaks of them seem a somewhat arbitrary collection of Christian practices whose organic or systematic links to the work of Christ, and to each other, remain unclear. This weakness is attributable, perhaps, to his anxiety to please every Christian body.

In and through friendships and practices in the Body of Christ we learn to embody forgiveness. And yet many difficulties remain. How are we to forgive enemies while respecting justice? How respond to those who refuse to repent? What about disparities in power? What about revenge and retributive punishment? What about righteous anger and 'moral hatred'? These issues get a good airing but there are no answers for every case since it is only in practice that this kind of wisdom is acquired. The lives of holy Christians, as well as stories from Flannery O'Connor, Dostoyevsky, Simon Wiesenthal, and others, illustrate the practice of forgiveness in breaking cycles of violence, revenge and oppression.

For Jones Christian forgiveness is not primarily a word spoken, an action performed or a feeling felt but 'a way of life appropriate to

friendship with the Triune God'. It is a theme which belongs to both dogmatic and moral theology—Jones' book makes this wonderfully clear. Perhaps the reason why there are so few books explicitly dedicated to forgiveness is because for classical theology *agape*, charity, is the fundamental reality of Christian living of which forgiveness, received and bestowed, will always be an essential expression.

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

MARY MACKILLOP'S SISTERS: A LIFE UNVEILED by Anne Henderson, *HarperCollins, Australia, 1997, 287pp.*

Behind this book lies an interesting tradition. The late Tony Parker's *The People of Providence* (1983) is a founding classic of that tradition. Parker's book was made up of a remarkable series of interviews with a wide variety of tenants in one particular housing estate in south London. He clearly had a warm and generous personality that enabled people to speak to him with amazing frankness about their lives. His other books have recorded interviews with people who live in lighthouses, people in a small town in the American mid-west, a coal-mining community in County Durham in 1985, the year of the miners' strike, soldiers in an infantry regiment in the British army, and, most memorably, in *Life after Life*, twelve murderers. Tony Parker must have had the knack of asking the right questions, of nodding his encouragement at the right moment, of helping his speakers to forget all about the tape recorder in front of them and to tell him everything. He knew instinctively how to select, edit and arrange his raw interviews, seldom speaking himself but letting each person tell his or her own tale without interruption.

Mary Loudon's book, *Unveiled: Nuns talking* (Chatto and Windus, 1992; Vintage 1993) is a brilliant series of interviews in that Parker tradition. In fact she wrote to Tony Parker in 1991, when she was working on her book, asking his advice about how she could give shape and structure to her collection of interviews with ten nuns whose lives had all been so very different. His prompt reply was published just recently in *The Author, The Journal of the Society of Authors* (Spring 1997). He describes how he went about deciding on the order of the interviews with his twelve murderers. It was, he says, "like a jigsaw. I tried a dozen different orderings over six weeks but finally the best I could do was say to myself with some confidence, 'Yes, that's the right order'. This involved, of course, leaving out some people altogether (I had 17 to play around with) and also a great deal of thinking, going for long walks with the dog, and listening to music. Music is always very important to me, as a kind of background or sub-text structure."

Anne Henderson's book, follows in the tradition of Parker and Loudon, though with some crucial differences. Its publication comes in the wake of the beatification in Australia (January, 1995) of Mary