BOOK REVIEWS

CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY,
ITS HISTORY AND CHALLENGE
By James J. Bacik
New York: Paulist Press
2002, xii, 175 pp., paper, ISBN 0-8091-4060-8
Reviewed by Joaquin C. Yap, Jr.

James Bacik's book is a welcome addition to his growing roster of short but accessible and highly informative studies of contemporary spirituality. Having previously written *Spirituality in Transition* (1996) and *Spirituality in Action* (1997), he now discusses the relationship between spirituality and theology, a recurring theme in what is ostensibly a historical survey of (primarily American) Catholic spiritual experience. As he puts it, he wishes to explore "the role of theology in channeling the energy of [today's] spiritual revival in constructive directions" (ix).

In his "Introduction," Bacik gives a helpful definition of what he himself admits is an elusive term. Spirituality, he writes, refers both to lived experience and a distinct academic discipline. As lived experience (which is Bacik's main concern), spirituality can be described in terms of one's relationship to the triune God: "It has to do with

worshiping God the Father, putting on the mind of Christ and listening to the Holy Spirit" (ix). For Bacik, spirituality has both centripetal and centrifugal dimensions; while one is drawn into a deeper and more intimate relationship with God, one is also propelled outward in vital action in the world at large.

The book is unevenly divided into two parts. Part One, entitled "The Relationship between Spirituality and Theology: History and Theory," is the more substantial section, yet it is only 75 pages compared to 100 pages of Part Two, which is entitled "Practical Applications: Theological Reflections on Common Experiences," and consists of twenty-seven brief essays on various subjects previously written by Bacik. To the author's credit, these short articles (ranging in topic from prayer and meditation to John XXIII and the CDF's *Dominus Iesus*) certainly display a happy marriage of spirituality and theology; here one finds penetrating spiritual reflection grounded in solid theological understanding.

Karl Rahner is Bacik's primary theological mentor. Rahner, along with Sandra Schneiders and Bernard Lonergan, is given a wide hearing as a theologian who succeeded in bridging the gap between theology and spirituality. Bacik writes: "Theology done well is always spiritually relevant. For Rahner, the way to close the gap between spirituality and theology is to do theology better. At its best, theology is nourished by prayer and leads to prayer" (63). This line alone makes reading the book a worthwhile endeavor.

James Bacik combines erudition, broad knowledge of various topics, a clear and elegant style, good training in systematic theology, and a profound regard for the spiritual life. This is not to say that the book is flawless. It is all too clearly written from an American point of view; the statistical trends are all drawn from the experience of U.S. Catholics. Bacik himself acknowledges this in his "Introduction"; nevertheless, one wishes for a more wide-ranging and "catholic" perspective. The author is occasionally guilty of easy labeling ("The average parish contains conservatives who prefer traditional forms of piety such as the rosary, benediction and Marian devotions, and progressives who are more attuned to Scripture reading,

liturgical participation and faith-sharing groups"), and more consistently susceptible to citing Rahner *ad infinitum.* Still, this slim volume makes for easy and informative reading; in itself, it is a fine example of how spirituality and theology can and should combine in a profitable way.

SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND CATHOLICISM: TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL THEOLOGY

Edited by Patricia Beattie Jung with Joseph Andrew Corey
Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press
2001, xxx, 311 pp., paper, ISBN 0-8146-5939-X
Reviewed by James T. Bretzke

Just a few years ago I was engaged in a conversation with a colleague on theses for a comprehensive exam in sexual ethics which he had drawn largely from Gerald Kelly's 1941 classic *Modern Youth and Chastity*—widely used in Catholic colleges in the 1940s and 1950s. Kelly's work contained five crystal clear and practical moral principles meant to guide young people in choosing the good and avoiding the evil in the sexual arena, such as "every directly venereal action is against the law of God, and a serious sin of impurity." The remaining four principles were likewise concerned directly in one way or the other with aspects of legitimate and illegitimate causing of venereal pleasure. This moral message was simple and clear: sexuality boiled down to sex, sex was dangerous since it ultimately concerned when one could and could not licitly engage in venereal pleasure at the peril of one's soul. My colleague maintained that Kelly's principles, founded on the unchanging pillars of human nature and the natural law, were just as valid today as they had been in the days of our parents who had used this book in their college theology courses.

Clear as this version of sexual ethics may have been, the theology of the human person developed in Vatican II, and continued through the writings of John Paul II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and reiterated most recently in the Congregation of the

Doctrine of the Faith's "Letter on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World" all put the accent on the development and integration of the whole human person, in all of his and her biological, psychological, emotional, spiritual, sociological and cultural complexity, rather than just on what aspects of venereal pleasure can be lawfully tolerated.

Since the theological anthropology of "whole" person affirms each individual's dignity and uniqueness, this means that there will be some necessary diversity that goes beyond merely our genetic make-up or DNA code. In developing a contemporary sexual ethics that is faithful to this view of the human person, how then can we deal with the notion of sexual diversity within the confines of Catholicism? Should not the role of moral theology be to lay down absolute norms founded in the natural law lived out in our human nature that is unchanging and common to all? Yet, even though these questions seem to suggest clear-cut answers, the authors of this volume present an understanding of the sources for theological reflection on both sexuality and its various lived expressions, which are morally complex if nothing else.

The fifteen essays in this book are divided into the "Introduction" by Patricia Beattie Jung, followed by sections on "Interpreting Church Teachings," with the lead essay by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, the only non-lay contributor. Other sections are: "Interpreting the Bible" (looking at hermeneutical issues, sexual violence, and same-sex issues in the Old and New Testaments presented by biblical scholars), "Interpreting Secular Disciplines" (with contributions by psychologists and philosophers), and a final section on "Interpreting Human Experience" (with essays by two lay Catholic women ethicians, Cristina Traina and Mary Hunt).

The book also contains a helpful index and list of ecclesial documents cited in the various essays. While not every area is given the same focus or breadth of treatment, by and large the essays are quite well-written and a good attempt has been made to incorporate a balanced variety of issues, viewpoints, and approaches, including special attention to the insights that the various disciplines of theology,

Scripture, ethics, and the social sciences might bring to a better understanding of sexuality—in all of its rich diversity and moral complexity. Since the issues are rarely simple, neither are the questions raised nor the answers tentatively proffered. While this collection may not propose solutions with the same clarity as Kelly's Modern Youth and Chastity, it helps to broaden our perspectives on the morally complex world of sexuality. Theologians and educated lay persons alike should find it a helpful stimulus to deeper reflection on these issues.

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH
Edited by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana
2004, xxx, 525 pp., paper, ISBN 88-209-7651-X
Reviewed by James H. Kroeger

For the first time in history, the Holy See has published a comprehensive sourcebook of the Church's social teaching. This is a significant achievement as some statistics indicate. The compendium has a 30-page introductory section and 525 pages of text. One finds 193 pages of references, of which 26 are "source" references (Scripture, councils, papal and church documents) and 167 are "subject" references (themes and topics). There are 1,232 detailed footnotes.

The idea of a compendium was proposed by John Paul II in his 1999 apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, when he noted: "It would be very useful to have a compendium of approved synthesis of Catholic social doctrine... which would show the connection between it and the New Evangelization" (EA 54). The same pope had noted earlier in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis:* "The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (SRS 41). The pope's dream has now become reality.

The compendium was written by the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice (PCPJ). The endeavor began five years ago under Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyên Van Thuân, then PCPJ president; his illness and death caused unavoidable delays. The project was guided to completion by Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, current PCPJ president. Martino pays tribute to his predecessor by noting that the compendium carries "the seal of a great witness to the Cross who remained *strong in faith* in the dark and terrible years of Vietnam" (xxvi).

This attractively produced and "user-friendly" volume begins with an introduction on "An Integral and Solidarity Humanism" (1-9), followed by twelve thematic chapters (13-325), and a conclusion that advocates "a civilization of love" (326-331). Some examples of the thematic chapters are: "The Church's Mission and Social Doctrine" (Two), "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society" (Five), "Safeguarding the Environment" (Ten), and "The Promotion of Peace" (Eleven). Although the content is not, in fact, new material (popes have spoken these truths frequently), the creative synthesis in a one-volume, handy compendium is a welcome gift.

This reviewer found several fresh and enlightening perspectives in the volume. Clear linkage is made between the Church's social teaching and her mission of evangelization (3-4). The text is presented as an instrument for fostering ecumenical and interreligious dialogue (6). The pivotal role of the laity in propagating Church social teaching is emphasized (xxiii). The compendium includes several enlightening thematic sections on such areas as "women and children" (169-170), "globalization" (203-207), "biotechnology" (267-270), "terrorism" (288-290), and the "civilization of love" (329-331). A fitting piece of artwork (Lorenzetti's "Allegory of Good Government") adorns the cover and an explanation of its meaning is printed on the inside cover of the book.

This compendium is destined to become a standard reference work for Church social vision and involvement. Already available in Italian and English, the work will be published in other languages, as well as in local editions. It challenges Christians to continue their

personal witness in the social arena; it also encourages the development of new community programs for authentic humanism within today's social structures.

The Church's social teaching has often been described as "Our Best Kept Secret"; this fine volume stands to achieve much in making the rich and profound patrimony of the Church better known, loved, and practiced.

101 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON VATICAN II
By Maureen Sullivan, O.P.
New York: Paulist Press
2002, xiii, 135 pp. paper, ISBN 0-8091-4133-7
Reviewed by James H. Kroeger

Maureen Sullivan's book on the Second Vatican Council forms part of the Paulist "101 Questions and Answers" series, which has reached nearly twenty volumes. This fact already alerts readers to the kind of book and its style that they will meet. Sullivan, a Dominican who holds a doctorate in theology from Fordham University and is an assistant theology professor at Saint Anselm College, arranges her 101 questions and answers into a generally chronological presentation of the "event" that was Vatican II.

The book opens with a brief "Introduction" which notes that a "popular primer on Vatican II" is needed today to show that "the Council's charter is not a dead letter" (3). In addition, the Council, which was "the biggest, most famous, historic adult education project ever held" (2), is not well known or appreciated by many Catholics.

Two foundational chapters present "The Calling of Vatican II" and "The Players, the Tensions, the Media" connected with the Council. In a total of twenty-three questions and answers, Sullivan introduces the background and protagonists of the Council; this material helps ordinary readers and students (one of the book's intended audiences) to understand the "workings" of a Council, Vatican II in particular. It is noteworthy that the author has thoroughly researched

her material, even travelling to Sotto il Monte to interview Loris Capovilla, John XXIII's long-time personal secretary (28).

Each of the next four chapters is devoted to one session of the Council (1962-1965). In forty-one questions and answers, Sullivan moves from "So, how did the conciliar debate finally begin?" (33) to "How did the Council end?" (69-70). The treatment presents the substantial questions facing Vatican II, the personages that were pivotal in the process, the growth in thinking during the debates, the outcomes and decisions finally reached. Along the way, Sullivan inserts many popular details about the Church and the Council; for example, she treats John XXIIII (43), the role of the conservatives (33-34, 46-48), Paul VI's birth control commission (56-57), nuns changing their habits (62-63), the role of Xavier Rynne (36, 45). On balance, Sullivan achieves an overall enlightening and enjoyable narrative of the Council.

Two substantial chapters describe "The Church Right after the Council—The Early Years" and "The Church Today—The Legacy of Vatican II." Here Sullivan narrates what happened after the Council in various areas: liturgy, theology, Catholic life and morals. She also chronicles how Vatican II's "new charter for the church" (1, 3) was implemented and what challenges still face the Church. A brief "Epilogue" rounds out Sullivan's presentation.

Several additional features enhance this volume. The table of contents reaches seven full pages, because it provides all of the 101 questions Sullivan answers; this allows readers to quickly locate any particular aspect of the Council they are interested in. Appendices provide the Latin and English titles of the Council's sixteen documents, as well as the dates of promulgation. One finds a helpful glossary of theological terms, as well as suggestions for further reading and an Index. This reviewer particularly appreciated Sullivan's approach in providing short explanations of key Council concepts within her narrative; some examples are: collegiality (11, 45, 119, 124), criteria for dissent (57-58), the Church-world relationship (58-62), religious freedom (69), and the "reception" process (74-75, 99, 114, 125).

Readers desiring a clear synopsis of the Council and its significance will find this an adequate first look. Of course, other sources are necessary for an in-depth discussion of Vatican II, the best of which is the Alberigo/Komonchak *History of Vatican II* (Orbis Books, currently four volumes). Sullivan has used her Council knowledge and clear-writing skills to communicate well; her work prompts one to say: "the Council was a special gift of the Spirit to the Church; Vatican II remains alive today."

WAS THE CHURCH TOO DEMOCRATIC?
COUNCILS, COLLEGIALITY AND THE CHURCH'S FUTURE
By Norman Tanner, S.J.
Bangalore: Dharmaran Publications
2003, xvi, 82 pp., cloth, ISBN 81-86861-59-9
Reviewed by James H. Kroeger

This book is the outcome of a lecture series, a fact that accounts for the manner of presentation—short, conversational, eminently crisp and clear. The volume presents the six Bishop Jonas Thaliath Lectures given in Bangalore, India, in 2003.

Tanner is a recognized authority on Church councils, having edited the two-volume *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Georgetown, 1990) and authored *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (Crossroad, 2001). Currently, he is professor at the Gregorian University (Rome) and serves as book review editor of *Gregorianum.*

This work explores the role and impact of councils in the life of the Church. The author believes that councils were central to the evolving identity of the Church, particularly during the first millennium; this heritage offers much hope for ongoing Church renewal in subsequent eras (e.g. Trent, Vatican II). This "council" potential is to be realized on several levels in general, regional, national, and local assemblies and synods. Tanner asserts: "The most important lesson of all is surely to recognize the action of the Holy Spirit in the councils. They are such a miracle of grace that without the Spirit

they cannot be understood" (13). How does Tanner unfold this general thesis?

In presenting the six lectures included in this book, the author addresses: (1) the pivotal importance of the first seven councils and the lessons to be learned; (2) regional or "grass-roots" councils; (3) the demise of regional councils and the deleterious consequences; (4) collegiality in Vatican II; and, (5-6) application of Vatican II thought to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

This slender volume contains much to recommend it, presenting the Church's conciliar experience in an engaging manner, asking provocative questions: "too Democratic"? Tanner is able to creatively communicate the formative influence of the councils on the very identity of the Church. In addition, the conciliar tradition has kept the Church relevant, "up to date, indeed ahead of its time" (19). He also makes a strong case that shows "the demise of regional councils after the period of the early church as one of the gravest wounds in the history of Christianity" (26).

The book communicates many lessons to be gleaned from Church history: the importance of discussion and consensus within the Church; the amazing achievement of the early councils in their delicate faith formulations that have, for the most part, endured down to today; the positive potential of episcopal collegiality as a cornerstone for renewal as envisioned by Vatican II; cautions against a false expectation that the Church will be (or ever was) fully united on all levels of doctrine and governance; the caveat against putting too much focus on the reform of the papacy and of the Roman curia (very "human" institutions). In brief, reading this volume renews one's realistic enthusiasm for the Church to become an authentic community in today's fragmented world.

A few reservations remain. Does the title of the book, though provocative and enticing, reflect the dominant content of the work (possibly better represented by the subtitle)? There is a curious absence of any discussion about the Federation of Asian Bishops' Con-

ferences (FABC) when regional episcopal associations and contributions are presented (50-53, 61-65).

On balance, this work is stimulating and rewarding. Much history of the Church councils (context, questions faced, major decisions, wider impact, lessons to be learned) is presented concisely and creatively. The extensive presentation of the Second Vatican Council informs and enlightens. The book is professionally produced, containing an index and footnotes; it has a table of the councils and a helpful map, showing the locations where councils were convened. In words addressed to Saint Augustine, who was invited to the council of Ephesus, but died before the invitation reached him: *Tolle, lege*—take and read!