

cellular operations, Darwinian evolution cannot be the only process at work. Scientists who allow their "faith" in evolution to blind them to the biochemical data run the risk of walking in the footsteps of the ecclesiastical authorities in the time of Galileo.

When the poet John Keats first read a certain translation of Homer, Keats was so impressed that he composed a sonnet ("On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"). To describe his reaction, Keats used an astronomical analogy: "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken...." Keats's reaction to Chapman's Homer parallels my own reaction to Behe's book. A new light has been focussed on discussions of evolution.

1. Cited by Behe, 39; my emphasis added. 2. *Nature*, April 3, 1997. 3. *Nature*, July 23, 1998, p. 313. 4. See John C. Caiazza, "A Hyper-Darwinian Enterprise," *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review* (Winter 1997), 52-56.

## ***Belief and the Public Square***

DERMOT QUINN

**Heart of the World, Center of the Church: *Communio*, Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation**, by David Schindler, *Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996. xvii+ 322 pp.*

QUEEN VICTORIA'S FIRST prime minister, William Lamb, Viscount Melbourne, cultivated an elegant indifference to matters of the soul. "Things have come to a pretty

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pass," he once remarked, "when religion is permitted to invade the sphere of private life." The Gospel as good form, the Nicene Creed as social nicety: he missed the point, it seems, with magnificent insouciance. The God of Lamb was not the Lamb of God. Before we compliment ourselves on superior insight, however, we should reflect, perhaps, on a curious inversion. In America, at the end of this century, another pretty pass has been reached: religion is allowed to enter the sphere of private life and there, in the name of erastianism, or the First Amendment, or embarrassed *politesse*, it is required to remain. Should it venture into the public square it must cloak itself in apology, the better not to contravene the delicate forms of our enlightened and resolutely pluralist social order. Its utterances must not offend multifarious modern sensibilities. There should be no privileging of truth-claims, and strict separation of Church and State must be observed at all times. In private, genuflection is permitted before an altar. In public, it must be done before the Supreme Court. Those are the rules, binding on believer and unbeliever alike. Whoever dissents is free to leave or make the case for something better. Thus, little by little, a secular religion establishes itself, indifferent to belief but exquisitely sensitive to form. Lord Melbourne might feel curiously at home.

Religion, then, seems to experience a form of house arrest in modern America. And yet—a counter-argument might run—this problem is surely more apparent than real. After all, believers claim for themselves those freedoms guaranteed by the secular order and are more secure in belief for them. Churches cannot seek special status in liberal democracies, but they can enter and expand the public square. They give voice to the voiceless. They shame the shameless. They call a fallen world to a higher purpose. They embrace the city of Man to promote the

city of God. One need look only to the critics—the American Civil Liberties Union, for instance, or the editorial writers of the *New York Times*. Their complaint seems to be not of clerical timidity but stridency. The churches have not only entered the public arena: they have captured it. Thus if religion flourishes the better for not being established, secularism may have done more for belief than any amount of sacerdotalism.

This accommodation of sacred to secular seems an elegant solution to the problem of belief in an age of constitutional restraint. Yet its very neatness should give us pause. Even as churches enter the public square, there is a curiously tamed quality to arguments grounded in transcendental or otherworldly claims. Wherein lies their distinctiveness? In matters of moral moment—the nature of economics, the schooling of children, the beginning of life and its end—the view of the churches may be less singular than first appears. There are clerical voices, of course, pulpiteering, pamphleteering, thinking their think-tank thoughts. They compete with the best of them in the marketplace of ideas. Yet that may be precisely the problem. To enter such a place is to accept, consciously or not, that the arena itself is a bigger idea than any of those ideas competing within it. Naturally, believers must make their case, for themselves as much as for others. Obscurantism, authoritarianism, fundamentalism will not do. But believers should also know that the public square is built on ontologies and epistemologies which, on closer examination, may destroy the project of belief itself. They have signed articles of peace with liberal democracy. Those articles may be subtle terms of surrender. When religion—a sign of contradiction—is sanctioned by the order it contradicts, it is either not very contradictory or is contradictory only of itself.

Such is the subject-matter, and such

the conclusion, of David Schindler's important new book. Schindler is a Christian theologian, and his work presumes acquaintance with a tradition and with highly technical arguments within that tradition. In particular, he has been moulded, and seeks himself to mould, the deepening of Catholicism's self-understanding which has occurred since the Second Vatican Council. Thinkers such as Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, indeed John Paul II himself are his guides. This may damn him already in some circles. If so, his argument stands vindicated: to dismiss him on those grounds alone is to lay bare the unacknowledged dogmatism and highly circumscribed intellectual freedom of liberal discourse.

This is a book, in other words, to appeal not only to Catholics. (Some of them, indeed, named in the text, will not like it at all.) It engages profoundly questions of meaning and belief which agitate modernity and seem radically insoluble to post-modernity. It demands and deserves a wide readership.

In one respect Schindler's project is unexceptional. He seeks to explore the implications of a paradox: that "Christians must embrace the world...without becoming identified with it; [they] must die to the world...without removing themselves from it." So far so familiar. From Paul to Augustine to Aquinas this question has been central to the Christian faith. Should the Church enter the world or stand at a distance from it? To ask the question is not to pose a problem of jurisdiction, hierarchy, or politics. It is to investigate the very nature of the Church itself. Since the Vatican Council, two ecclesiologies have held sway: on the one hand, a liberationist vision which "opens the Church to the world, but in a way that now appears to import the structures of the world into the Church"; on the other, a neoconservative vision which hopes "to safeguard the integrity of the

Church by distinguishing it clearly from the world, while at the same time turning [it] towards the world, as source and inspiration for the Christian's authentic worldly presence." Yet these ecclesiology are unsatisfactory. The "dichotomy they offer is false. With the first, "the Church enters the world only to find that...her reality as Church is already implied by the best of what the world is on its own." With the second, "the Church adds something definite and gratuitous to the world, but only by way of inspiration and in anticipation of the life to come." Either way there remains a gap between the Church and the world. Each ecclesiology lacks a sense of Church as itself a theological form, an imaging of the triune God, a participation in the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Church is communion. It informs the world as the soul informs the body. In so doing it does not destroy the autonomy of the world, denying the integrity and the legitimacy of the created order of being. Instead it brings that order to its fullest meaning. As Balthasar has it, "the world will not disappear in God; rather the last sacrament will be the entire triune God revealed in the entirety of glorified creation."

This *communio* ecclesiology forms the intellectual core of Schindler's work. It is a deeply serious effort to understand the implications of the Christian faith as incarnation and eschatology. What does it say of history that Christ enters it? What does it say of Christ that he shares in history and in eternity? What does it say of the human person, and of the created order, that they are stamped with the image and likeness of God? Schindler offers some answers, subtle, powerful, and in places brilliant. Here is a book to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.

To be sure, those who deny Schindler's premises will feel little obligation to follow him to his conclusions. That would be unfortunate. Ecclesiology apart, the

book is an extremely valuable exploration of Anglo-American liberalism, the philosophical underpinning of the public square in which so many faiths repose so much faith. According to thinkers such as John Courtney Murray, it is precisely liberalism's indifference to substantial questions of belief which provides space for pluralism, and belief itself, to grow. Yet the pluralism defined by the Vatican Council is not the same as the agnosticism or the jurisprudential neutrality by which diverse societies organize their politics of belief. Liberalism does not reside in remoteness from metaphysics. It has truth-content of its own. "As liberalism often claims no theory of the good but only a commitment to a free market of [such] theories and to rational debate about [them], so, similarly, does it often claim no religious truth but only a commitment to formal juridical procedures which make possible a free market of religious truths and rational debate about them. Yet this apparent impartiality enfolded metaphysical presuppositions, and to their unfolding Schindler dedicates himself. When he is finished the Murrayite project seems a great deal less secure.

Murray's central claim is, of course, that the first two articles of the First Amendment—guaranteeing the free exercise and nonestablishment of religion—constitute "articles of peace" between the secular and sacred orders. Yet the effect of this (albeit unintended by Murray) has been to privatize religion, permitting it public voice only insofar as it articulates the emaciated understanding of the human person allowed by eighteenth-century liberalism. As Schindler argues, building on a fine essay by Gerry Bradley of Notre Dame, "one cannot give meaning to the religious clauses of the First Amendment without in fact favoring some set of particular religious convictions." Moreover, agnosticism about the outcome of religious choice is itself a form of choice, for it privileges one an-

thropology over another, favoring a vision of man which denies that, in his very being, he is positively constituted towards God. Freedom from coercion and freedom for God are two quite different freedoms, two quite different notions of the human person.

To be fair, Schindler exposes ambiguities, not radical contradictions, in Murray's jurisprudence. Still, those ambivalences have implications. For Murray, American secularism is an aberration, a falling away from the principles upon which the country was founded. For Schindler, it is unavoidably implicit in the "articles of peace." Indeed even American religiosity "tends of its nature toward inversion into secularism," in that it accepts too cheerfully that private theism may come of public atheism. This will seem a harsh truth in a land where, overwhelmingly, the public claims to pray, to believe in a personal God, and to expect to live with Him forever. Yet the distance is not especially great. It is certainly curious that an appetite for gospel truth sits side by side with a public morality which has all but collapsed. That apart, precisely because it is an appetite, the juxtaposition may not be so jarring after all. There is an oddly consumerist quality to the American way of religion, a shopping around for salvation. The public square is filled with customized eschatologies, offering an embarrassment of riches to the discerning pilgrim. Some of the wares are banal, of course, and all too many of the salesmen are hucksters. That is less important than the denominational diversity itself. Choice shouts from spire, pulpit, and television set, subtly altering the thing chosen and the apparently autonomous chooser. Thus the declension. God's Covenant with Man becomes Man's Covenant with God, ensuring a Gospel reduced to social endorsement. No wonder that suburbia seeks salvation in Crystal Cathedrals; that it buys its bibles in

Authorized and Alternative forms; that it demands comfort for itself and condemnation for its enemies. The Rock of Ages is now lab-tested and comes with an Eternal Life warranty. Failing that, it offers a money-back guarantee. Whatever their intentions, the constitution-makers wrought a clever eighteenth-century trick. Theist, deist, or atheist, they produced a sacred-secular order which has made neo-pelagians of us all.

Though cleaving to their assorted orthodoxies, many believers thus remain unwitting children of the Enlightenment. They may think themselves anti-modern but, like Monsieur Jourdain, they have been speaking Anglo-American liberalism all their lives. On the other hand, some people of faith are entirely conscious of an eighteenth-century foster parentage and, worse, show no desire to leave home. Making articles of peace with all manner of modernisms, they wonder only that a fuss should be made about this in the first place. Consider the matter of economics. Certain neoconservatives—Michael Novak, George Weigel, Richard John Neuhaus—see no incompatibility between Catholicism and Democratic Capitalism, suggesting that the latter gives material expression to notions of human freedom and creativity implicit in the former. Indeed, they argue that the present pope is himself a democratic capitalist, citing as evidence his great encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*. Schindler disagrees. Acknowledging "the significant achievement of these men in mediating Catholic thought to American liberal institutions," he sees danger in the unintended "logic" of their positions. They evince, he suggests, too undifferentiated a notion of human freedom. A kind of baptized Lockean individualism seems to suffice for Christian anthropology, with deeper questions about the nature of the self unanswered because unasked. Authentic human creativity offers an image of divine creativity, but in subtle and

shapely ways. Its purpose—to bring about a civilization of love to give glory to God—can only be achieved when freedom is properly understood as the received gift by the Son from the Father. For Schindler this trinitarian economy offers the only model by which any human economy, moral or material, may be understood.

Recent visitors to this quarrel—it has been rumbling for quite a while—may be pleased or perplexed by its pugnacity. Seasoned observers, on the other hand, may experience a weary sense of diminishing returns. To be sure, the dispute is less arcane than first appears: the anthropology generates significant consequences in the workaday world. Yet honorable disagreement is also possible among those whose orthodoxy is not in question. The disputants might think of signing some articles of peace of their own. That is unlikely. Genuine divisions remain, and Schindler points to some of them in a brief summary of Weigel's most

recent work. Still, an armistice if not a fully fledged treaty is surely overdue.

Not in dispute, however, is the vigor and versatility of *communio* thought. It offers an intelligible account of the whole order of created being, placing primacy on the “mutual coinherence of the eschatological and incarnational dimensions of the Church,” deploring any false dichotomy between the two. To insist on that mutuality is to reach the core of Schindler's book. *Communio* itself, in other words, is both “the inmost center of the Church [which is] fully completed only in the time beyond time,” and also the content of the Christian proposal to the very heart of our culture, indeed of every culture.” Schindler has explored its implications with a sure touch and a splendid panache. His answers will not please everyone. All the same, even Lord Melbourne, inhabiting the time beyond time, may now realize that he has asked the right questions.



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