

in her darkened room, she received a constant stream of visitors seeking prayers and counsel. More than 100,000 names appear in the visitors' book and this figure does not take into account those who visited more than once (p. 55). The author writes: 'Her aim seems to have been to lead her visitors to work out a solution to their problems with the help of the Holy Spirit. She did not regard herself, and disliked being regarded, as a kind of oracle' (p. 56). Nevertheless, it is clear that many people considered that they had received extraordinary graces by means of their brief interviews with Marthe and the author includes a few well-chosen examples.

The Foyers themselves are also described by some personal testimonies, including the author's own. He explains that Marthe Robin believed that she had been instructed directly from heaven that they were to be centres of 'light, charity and love', 'charity' referring here especially to fraternity among Christians, and 'love' to the love of God exercised in prayer (p. 114). The members do not take vows, though most are celibates, and may include both men and women. Each Foyer has a priest-member as its spiritual father, though he is not in charge of temporalities. Some run schools, which the author notes have been a striking source of vocations to the priesthood in France (p. 128).

This relatively brief study raises some questions which it would be interesting to see discussed more fully. For example, the author speaks of Marthe as 'still the subject of controversy' (p. 12), but it is not clear what the controversy is about. Elsewhere he mentions a crisis that the movement passed through in the 1970s, but gives very few details (p. 81).

Some of the most interesting testimonies in the book are those of the philosopher and 'academician', Jean Guilton. He emphasises Marthe Robin's naturalness, and her capacity to adapt her conversation to those to whom she spoke. He remarks on the paradox that it was while living for years in complete darkness that she spoke of 'Foyers of light'. We also learn that Guilton was urged by Marthe (p. 75) to encourage his friend Pope Paul VI to remain firm and not to abdicate (it would be interesting to know if she ever spoke of that pontiff's confrontation with Archbishop Lefebvre, another of Guilton's friends.).

This book is written in a personal, even 'homely' style. It contains a number of repetitions and, no doubt to keep down costs, no photographs. A useful bibliography of recent books about Marthe Robin, almost all in French, is included. As the author says (p.149), the private writings which Marthe produced between 1929 and 1932, as well as the many letters that she dictated, will no doubt be the subject of much theological study in future years.

THOMAS CREAN OP

A SOUL-CENTRED LIFE: EXPLORING AN ANIMATED SPIRITUALITY by Michael Demkovich OP, *The Liturgical Press*, Collegeville 2010, pp.144, £13.50 pbk

Few serious books on spirituality are predicated upon a pun, but Michael Demkovich's *A Soul-Centered Life: Exploring an Animated Spirituality* is certainly not like most of these books. Both a thoroughgoing critique of the current state of spirituality, as well as a creative contribution to the field itself, Demkovich's latest showing is ultimately a plea to re-appropriate the Thomistic teaching on the soul and so literally to reanimate both the Church and the academy in light of the classical teaching.

The author takes on two distinct yet related problems: the first concerning those who self-identify as 'spiritual, but not religious', and the second concerning the state of spirituality in the contemporary academy. While he stops short of

identifying an actual causal relation, Demkovich does seem to suggest that if the intellectual pursuit of spirituality were better grounded and more coherent then it is likely that the confused state of contemporary spiritual practice would reflect that stability. In fact, he structures his book around the connection: the first part lays out the author's critique of various contemporary models and offers his own alternative methodology; the second part introduces a fourfold schema which is intended to serve as a model for how academic spirituality can be accomplished in a truly integral way; the final part returns to questions posed at the beginning and further argues against the 'spiritual, but not religious camp' in a way that is meant to be compelling both to spiritual theologians and everyday undergrads alike.

Demkovich's major critique with the established schools of spirituality present in the academy is that in one way or another they all focus too exclusively on particular practices. In the critique section of the first part the author addresses a number of popular approaches: spirituality as liturgy, as academic discipline, as history, and as theology. For Demkovich none of these will do. When seen as liturgy, spirituality tends to lock practice too fixedly into the rites and rubrics of public worship. As history, it can become too heavily contextualized and so seem remote. And as theology, it tends either to become so distinct an academic discipline as to masquerade as autonomous or to become simply another distinct hermeneutic or analytic method in the context of some broader theological inquiry. Demkovich proposes an alternative vision, of a discipline which sees the soul as the integrating factor of the human person and so spirituality as the integrating field or discipline which binds theology to all other fields as well as to the life of the everyday Christian.

Because the soul is the intellectual skeleton-key for Demkovich, this new methodology is necessarily personal. That is, investigating specific people's spiritualities will be what yields an account of the human person in relation to God that is at once intellectually significant and morally desirable. Most of the book is taken up with case studies in his new method, focusing on the characters of Maximus the Confessor, Catherine of Siena, Ignatius of Loyola, and Teresa of Calcutta. These sketches attend to three major factors that constitute the person's spirituality: the self, life, and doctrine. Doctrine is of particular interest to Demkovich and so as he associates a particular type of spirituality (ascetic, mystical, aesthetical, and social-critical) with each of the subjects, likewise he identifies a particular doctrine that he identifies as central to their way of life. For instance, the ascetic spirituality of Maximus the Confessor is associated with the mystery of the Incarnation, whereas the speculative mysticism of Catherine of Siena is focused particularly on the Blessed Trinity.

As important as the methodological move is for Demkovich, the real upshot comes in his conclusion where he returns to the question of being spiritual but not religious. The critical study of spirituality as presented in the book will always yield both a morality and a doctrinal framework of theology operative in the life of the individual practitioner. The very spiritual person, then, who distances themselves from organized religion out of a fear of dogma and an exclusive moral order, has only succeeded in producing yet another religion. Further, to study any individual spiritual writer or their practices outside of their historical and doctrinal context will necessarily yield a very flawed picture, and any attempt to emulate those practices devoid of their doctrinal content will always be wanting, for the animating force, the very life of the practice, is the doctrine. As Demkovich leaves it, then, the problem of spirituality without religion is either that it is no spirituality at all, or that, in one's effort to live a given spirituality apart from the religious tradition in which it emerged, one succeeds only in producing an entirely new religion and spirituality.

Demkovich sets an enormous task for himself, both to offer a new and insightful approach to spirituality as a discipline as well as to give answer to the question

which he associates with the great hunger of the human heart, and the critical importance that doctrine and religious practice have in responding to that need. He accomplishes the latter by way of the former, and in the process takes the reader on a rollicking and sometimes breathtaking romp through the history of largely Western Christian spirituality. This book will serve as a helpful resource to both critical scholars in the field and pastoral care workers, and may just help to answer, at least for some, why ‘spiritual, but not religious’ just won’t cut it for serious thinkers.

DOMINIC McMANUS OP

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS, SOCIETY AND CULTURE by John Haldane, *Imprint-Academic*, Exeter 2009, pp. xv + 400, £17.95 pbk
REASONABLE FAITH by John Haldane, *Routledge*, London 2010, pp. xi + 201, £23.99 pbk

Both books collect earlier articles, dating from 1989 to 2008 in *Practical Philosophy* (PP), and from 1994 to 2009 in *Reasonable Faith* (RF), edited to make a sustained argument. Not popularized philosophy, they are addressed to the non-professional, not exclusively Catholic, reader.

PP is divided into a long introduction followed by three parts with six chapters on ethics, five on society, and four on culture. Professor Haldane (JH) explicitly rejects both idea and image of society as invented by pre-existing individuals (PP 225–26). We are social animals who nonetheless choose the way we live together; to that extent human living is ethical and ‘arguably the deepest source of ethical experience lies in the recognition of human beings as subjects and fellow persons, and as bearers of various kinds of mutual normative relations. Some of the latter may plausibly be regarded as contractual, such as marriage, but others, such as parenthood are culturally transformed relations rooted in our animal nature’ (PP 76). How we choose to live together reveals our values.

The common good is a social order in which good values may be realized. Consequently, to know the common good is to choose, both [a] what and [b] how values are to be realized. Because both [a] and [b] will often be contentious, so also will be what is thought to constitute the common good. In chapter 9, which, with chapter 10, discusses the relationship between the individual, society, and state with reference to the liberalism of John Rawls, JH considers how the ‘common good’ is properly to be understood. ‘The apparently radical anti-individualism [of ‘the idea that every law should have as its proper goal the well-being of society as a whole’] is sometimes moderated by commentators who urge an interpretation of society as an aggregate, and thereby treat the “common good” as a distributive notion, equivalent to “the good of each and every member”’ (PP 226). JH opposes that position on the grounds that it is an implausible interpretation of Aquinas (PP 227) and that it misunderstands society. (PP ch. 9 *passim*). For JH ‘The common good is essentially shared. It is a *good-for-many*, taken collectively, rather than a ‘*good-to-many*’ taken distributively’ (PP 227). He clarifies his meaning: ‘the common good [includes], for example, the notion that what justifies the expenditure of society’s resources upon universities wherein people are supported in their thinking about these very issues is the fact that the goods attained thereby are ‘communicable’, reverting to each member’. This is genuinely thought provoking. Two caveats: first, it does not follow from the fact that something enhances the common good that the state ought to provide it through ‘the expenditure of society’s resources’, if ‘society’s resources’ refers to tax revenue; secondly, precisely how ‘... within a community we are all better when some of us achieve understanding’ (PP *loc.cit.*) needs more analysis.