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Review: 'The Universal Catechism Reader: Reflections and Responses'

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The Universal Catechism Reader: Reflections and Responses. Edited by Thomas J. Reese. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. vi + 237 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

This book is a collection of papers given at a Woodstock Center symposium in January 1990. The papers evaluate various aspects of the first draft of the Universal Catechism coordinated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The authors are uniformly first-rate theologians and catechetical theorists: Marthaler, Cunningham, Boys, Wright, E. Johnson, Dulles, Fink, Power, Hellwig, Spohn, Hollenbach, Cahill, Buckley, and O'Malley. These authors differ mainly in the degree of tact they use in delivering their conclusions, but their conclusions themselves are virtually unanimous: this draft is in need of deep and serious revisions if it is not to be rejected entirely. Hollenbach expresses a representative position when he suggests that the present text be treated as the initial draft documents at Vatican II were: vote *non placet* and start from scratch. Bishop Raymond Lucker, in a concluding essay, remarks that if the process of producing a final draft does not slow down, and if the serious criticisms are not addressed, this monumental project might end in failure.

Some authors, such as Marthaler, Hellwig, and Fink, try very hard to offer sincere praise to the drafters on certain points in order to balance their trenchant critiques. Others, such as Spohn and O'Malley, pull few punches as they characterize the document as positively harmful. Some of these differences in approach may have come from the varying quality of segments of the draft itself. Hellwig and Fink, for example, comment on prayer and liturgy, which are apparently presented in a more redeemable fashion than is the moral vision that Spohn criticizes.

The content of the criticisms is remarkably similar throughout the collection. Some of the main targets: the unintegrated division of the draft into the four categories of creed, sacraments, commandments, and the Lord's Prayer; the often fundamentalist use of Scripture; the overly selective quoting of Vatican II documents to the neglect of the spirit of *aggiornamento*; a neo-scholastic top-down style of theologizing and a sometimes mechanical reliance on natural law theory; the presentation of particular theological positions as if they were magisterial dogmas; a lack of attention to the hierarchy of truths; the treatment of women and the incessant use of sexually exclusive language; and in general a regressive approach that does not take seriously enough the major advances of the twentieth century in biblical scholarship, in theology, in catechetics, and in dialogue with the natural and social sciences. Such criticisms are presented not as generalizations but as a result of concrete analysis of the text, often on a line by line basis.

The draft is commended for its willingness to use Scripture and Vatican II documents at all, for its treatment of medical-moral issues, for its incorporation of Eastern perspectives on liturgy, and for its inclusion of significant materials on Catholic social teaching.

This work is valuable for the close study it offers of an early stage of what will likely prove to be an exceedingly important document. It should be required reading for all who study catechetics. It could also be used in courses in systematic theology as an example of seasoned theologians applying their tools in a practice and concrete manner. For undergraduate, it is probably accessible only

to advanced students. The book belongs in every Catholic college library and in any library with an interest in religious education and systematic theology.

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DENNIS M. DOYLE

Gilkey on Tillich. By Langdon Gilkey. New York: Crossroad, 1990. xvi + 215 pages. \$24.95.

This wide-ranging expository and critical study of the theology of Paulus Tillich is much more than a fine contribution to the literature on Tillich's theology. This book is a tribute to a teacher and friend that shares numerous personal recollections (see especially Chapter Eleven) and gives insight into why and how Gilkey recognizes himself to be "thoroughly Tillichean" (xiii).

This three-part book interprets major themes in Tillich's thought, for example, theonomy and heteronomy, the theology of culture and the method of correlation, Christology and New Being. I will limit my focus to a few areas that give the reader insights into Gilkey's distinctive way of being "Tillichean."

In Chapter One Gilkey's unique interpretation of Tillich immediately emerges. In treating Tillich's pre-American political works Gilkey argues against interpretations of Tillich as a static thinker. The important concept, "theonomy" (the participation of the transcendent in and through the autonomy and creativity of the finite and historical), had a *temporal process* meaning from Tillich's earliest works to the final volume of *Systematic Theology* (11-13). The significance of this process emphasis unfolds in subsequent chapters as Gilkey repeatedly brings Whitehead's philosophy (a topic addressed in his own dissertation) into dialogue with Tillich (see 17, 18, 19, 83, 84).

Gilkey's unique manner of being Tillichean is also evident in Chapter Four. Gilkey argues that theology of culture requires a close interrelation of culture and religion. This interrelation requires attention not only to the apprehension of the sacred ground of our being within culture, but also to the awareness of our estrangement from that ground, such as estrangement from nature in a technological culture. This theme was articulated extensively, although somewhat differently, in *Society and the Sacred* (1981). Against static interpretations of Tillich's correlation method that view it as simply philosophical question and theological answer, Gilkey points out how the two are interrelated and interdependent. Here his argument for interrelation is very much in keeping with the perspective on the method of correlation as he developed it in Chapter Six of *Reaping the Whirlwind* (1976).

One of the most provocative chapters is ten in which Gilkey assesses the role of the Tillichean theologian in our age. Because God is identical with being, because religion and culture are interrelated as are theological and philosophical questions, the theologian as a public figure must stand in culture and know its questions and stand in the church and interpret its message. The work of theology should illumine culture, interpret the message of the theological community, attend to the areas of cultural decline, and interpret politically the drive toward justice. This is vintage Gilkey at its best.

This work is clearly not for beginners. I would recommend it to graduate students with some familiarity with Tillich and Gilkey. It would complement