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Review: 'Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church'

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overlooking this "sign of the times," its implications, and consequences, this otherwise fine theological compendium misses the cutting edge in its goal of prospection.

St. Meinrad School of Theology

CARMEL MCENROY

Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church. By Gerald D. Coleman, S.S. New York: Paulist, 1988. iv + 110 pages. \$5.95 (paper).

In this short book Gerald Coleman, president and rector of St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, provides a clear summary of official Roman Catholic teaching and practice in regard to divorce and remarriage.

It is significant that the opening chapter focuses not on abstract theory, but on the people who are divorced and remarried. Borrowing heavily from Steven Preister's work, the author presents an overview of the statistical data regarding divorce and remarriage among Americans in general and Catholics in particular over the past few decades. The author then proceeds to outline four major points made by Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* regarding the status of divorced and remarried Catholics in relation to the church.

Chapter two provides a brief overview of a Catholic perspective of marriage. The author first points to some of the shifts in the understanding of marriage that have developed from the time of Aquinas to Vatican II. He then compares the treatment of marriage in the 1917 Code of Canon Law with that found in the 1983 Code.

There follows a study of specific issues relating to the meaning of Christian marriage and to the situation of divorced and remarried Catholics. In chapter three Coleman addresses the question of the kind of living faith that is necessary for a Christian marriage, and how a couple preparing for marriage need to be helped in discerning the quality of their faith life. Chapter four explains the church's official teaching against eucharistic participation for Catholics in an "irregular marriage." The following two chapters examine the internal forum solution officially approved by the Catholic hierarchy, and the automatic excommunication imposed by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 and removed by the American bishops in 1977. In the remainder of the book Gerald Coleman examines the scriptural statements regarding divorce, the Council of Trent's teaching on indissolubility, and some contemporary pastoral considerations.

This book will be welcomed by those looking for a brief overview and explanation of the Roman Catholic Church's present position regarding divorce and remarriage. Coleman has done a fine job presenting an easy-to-read summary of this official teaching.

If, however, the reader is looking for the author's personal stance regarding some of the deep questions that trouble many sincere, dedicated grass-roots Catholics, and that have been raised in recent scholarly works on divorce and remarriage in the Catholic Church, this volume will be disappointing. While the author mentions some of these questions, he sidesteps giving much of a clue to where he stands on them. If this book is used in a classroom situation, it will need a companion that delves into some of these troubling issues.

To say all this is not to discredit the book. It remains a worthwhile volume. The intent, rather, is to define what the book has set out to do, and what lies beyond its scope.

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WILLIAM P. ROBERTS

Theological Investigations. Vol. 21: *Science and Christian Faith*. By Karl Rahner. Translated by Hugh M. Riley. New York: Crossroad, 1988. vii + 279 pages. \$29.50.

Chapter 2, the longest in the book, is the only one dealing with the natural sciences, though most chapters in Part I give some space to theology's relation to the natural sciences or to its status as a *Geisteswissenschaft*, especially chapter six. But Rahner's longstanding acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the natural sciences is the context of much of his theologizing in this collection of articles and lectures.

Rahner's basis for distinguishing what is properly theological and what is subject to the standards of the natural sciences remains constant: the distinction between the object of theology which is the totality of existence and its ultimate meaningfulness, and the object of science which is the patterns of finite phenomena (19). He warns science against making metaphysical judgments about the totality, but he grants to science a say about the rational plausibility of ways of understanding not only evolution and the cosmos, normal topics for the natural sciences, but also about topics that are specifically doctrinal. He warns that "transubstantiation" can carry meanings which "rightly seem nonsensical to a modern physicist" (221). Science's views influence his interpretation of Chalcedon's Christology (167, 229-32) and his demythologization of ideas about resurrection and eternal life (253). He says that the old division between spirit and matter, soul and body, does not work in the light of thinking computers and the evolution of thinking life-forms from matter (28-29, 33-34, 42-46, 240).

The basic Rahnerian theme dominates every chapter: that the experience of the Absolute Mystery is the basic revelation of God, that the fundamental moment of faith is a positive response to this mystery, that theology is a working out of the implications of this under the guidance of historical revelation, and that in the hierarchy of truths or doctrines this experience of Mystery is the reference point for all else.

This volume contains no real surprises but reaffirms some basic Rahnerian messages: that redemption is not really from "outside" but is self-redemption by personal acts of freedom achieved only because God's absolute grace thus empowers people from within to save themselves (240-43); that the hypostatic union is not to be understood as an event separable from the credal statement that the incarnation is for us and our salvation, part of God's overall self-communication to us and the entire universe (214-15); that it is not Christianity as an institution that is salvation for the whole world, but rather what Christianity is at its core, an explicit expression of the general and efficacious salvific will of God (174-75).

The translation by Hugh Riley is a clear and lively one, providing Rahner with strong English expressions, calling theology without doctrinal study