

Furthermore, the acceptance of some aspects of Marxist ideology by some African governments did not imply widespread acceptance of Marxism by the people at large. Nevertheless, in the countries McKenna has chosen for his study, countries where the Catholic Church had a high profile, the impact of Marxist ideas was significant and constituted a serious challenge to the Church and its mission.

While acknowledging that there were significant variations in the particular form of the Church's encounter with Marxism from country to country, McKenna underlines the common elements of the Church's response in each situation. These included: public statements by bishops offering carefully measured critiques of Marxism; programmes of education for the faithful in the social doctrine of the Church; private discussions between Church representatives and government; the development of basic ecclesial communities, and increased involvement of laity in the Church.

While this response did not 'effect any quick or dramatic reversals of Marxist influence' (p. 227), it did, with the exception of Mozambique, make the governments concerned a bit more cautious in the implementation of Marxist oriented policies. However, by far the most significant outcome of the Catholic Church's encounter with Marxism in sub-Saharan Africa was the development of 'a heightened social consciousness' (p. 228) and the assumption by the laity of a larger role in planning and action within the Church.

My own experience as a missionary in Zambia in the years 1975-77 would lead me to concur with McKenna's judgment that the Church's encounter with Marxism in Africa contributed significantly to its maturation as an indigenous Church, challenging it to discover its distinctive voice and chart its own course of development in a post-colonial environment.

McKenna's study is clearly focused, carefully researched, logically ordered

and well written. I have just two critical comments. First, I was surprised to see so little reference to the responses of the other Christian Churches to Marxism. McKenna does indeed acknowledge that the Zambian Bishops' major instruction on Marxism, 'The Churches and Marxism' was issued jointly with the leaders of the Protestant Churches. However, he has, for the most part, chosen to ignore the ecumenical dimension of this issue. Second, a more extended section on the effects of the decline of Marxist influence on the development of the Church in sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade would have been valuable. In spite of these lacunae, McKenna's book is an important contribution to significant though neglected aspects of the Catholic Church's historical development in Sub-Saharan Africa in the immediate post-colonial era.

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Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family. By Rosemary Radford Ruether. London: SCM Press, 2001. Pp. 294. Price: £15.95. ISBN 0-334-02822-1.

This book makes good use of various approaches necessary to grasp the conditions for understanding the family as a sociological phenomenon, such as history, economy, sociology, politics and gender-studies, but it leaves one craving for a *definition* of the family or at least for a coherent understanding of its essential traits. Its main problem, it seems to me, is that it both rejects and accepts that the family is founded on marriage, and that marriage is a sacrament of God's love.

The description in chapter one of the multiform ways of living together in the ancient world is meant, perhaps, to replace a definition, relying on the implicit claim that no such definition can be given. But the origin of monogamy is left unexplored, and there is no discussion of the insight

that sexual love is holy as it mirrors the Covenant between God and his People, Heaven and Earth. In her discussion of Early Christianity (chapter two), as well as Medieval (chapter three) and Post Reformation Christianity (chapter four), the idea that the Covenant is reflected in marriage is overlooked. Hence the author's suggestion that the Covenant should inspire the making of families in the future (chapter nine) constitute an anticlimax eroding the libertarian foundations of the book.

Chapters five and six – 'From the Progressive Era through the Great Depression' and 'Changing Ideologies and Realities (1940-1975)' demonstrate Ruether's skill in integrating economic, social and political analyses and plausibly portray the changes in family life induced by economic developments. Chapters seven and eight concern the American scene, arguing that the Christian Right is wrong in its defence of the family against dissolution, because Christianity is anti-family in its origin.

The interesting theory that Christianity from the beginning was 'anti-family' was put forward in chapter one; it relies on an understanding of the family as being exclusively an economic institution serving the preservation of property. If the family were essentially an economic institution preventing the fair distribution of wealth, then Christianity would of course be 'antifamily'. But it is also crucial to Ruether's argument against the Christian Right that the family is a place where oppression should have no place. The central place given to women's rights and the perceived link between women's 'right' to abortion and women's delivery from male oppression relies on this. Hence, Ruether seems to regard freedom from oppression to be essential to the family, and she enlists Christianity in support of this idea.

It is admittedly difficult to gain a coherent attitude towards the family, and even more so to define it. That the

family in Ruether's view is both oppressive and non-oppressive illustrates this. Perhaps Ruether discovered the difficulty of definition as her work progressed. Even so, the lack of definition disturbs the argumentation to the point of annulling it. What remains is the rhetoric, which is central to the book's genre.

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Lost Soul? The Catholic Church Today. By Daniel J. O'Leary. Dublin: The Columba Press, 1999. Pp. 252. Price €12.68. ISBN 1-85607-262-2.

The contemporary struggle between secularization and the sacred has given rise to many zealously written books to defend religious truth and practice, or to explain them in new and puzzling ways. This book belongs, perhaps, to the latter category.

Lost Soul? contains an introduction and ten chapters, five of which are written by parishioners and friends of Fr O'Leary, who wrote the remaining sections and supervised the book. He and his co-authors have made a brave but puzzling effort to counter the tidal wave of secularization.

The heart of their argument is contained in two chapters, 'Resetting the Compass' and 'Finding True North' (pp. 28-29). O'Leary points to dualism as a festering sin in the body of the Churches because the original design of God's self-revelation can get lost, wrong turnings can be taken, the first purpose can be gradually sidelined. On page 30, he states: 'Sometimes we act as though there were no more dimensions to God other than those revealed in Jesus; ... as though the only authenticity of the historic religions of the world lay in the implicit and anonymous dependence on Christian Revelation; as though major belief systems of all time had nothing original to offer to us, as Christians, about the nature of God.' These statements are, to put it mildly, difficult to reconcile with *Dominus Iesus*.