

R **review** **for** **religious**

Christian Heritages and Contemporary Living

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1994 • VOLUME 53 • NUMBER 6

taining membership, clarifying goals, owning individual experience, being up front with their stories, collaborating on tasks, reining in projections, dealing with differentiation, scapegoating, flight, phony bonding, euphoria, resistance to dependence, and so forth. What makes it all the wilder is that these processes are being related to Christ. Moreover, English's Ignatian framework seems to add a dimension that many groups neglect: how to discern whether their decisions are ever confirmed in practice, consistent with their stated goals. And how do outcomes from these decisions square with past moments of truth? Chapter 9 addresses this issue, and chapter 10 has some good advice on how to gear up for the long run.

There is a world that peeks out from behind the book—the faith communities that English has actually worked with over a number of years. Allusions to these are clipped and not always satisfying, though you can always get the point he is making. The fact that the task of recording group processes is notoriously difficult makes that an achievement in itself. The exercises that conclude each chapter—a significant portion of the book—make it a kind of workbook. These exercises describe the ground rules which English's faith communities typically followed and are meant to help other people organize themselves to have experiences similar to the ones he narrates. They would certainly be worth trying, although I suspect they would work better with guides like John English and his colleagues. In any case, this book would be a great help for those who are starting to go sour on the excessive individualism of much current spirituality.

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Two Sisters in the Spirit:

Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity

Hans Urs von Balthasar. Translated by Donald Nichols, Anne Elizabeth Englund, and Dennis Martin. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992. Pp. 499. Paper. \$19.95.

According to its author, this work is "an attempt at theological phenomenology" (p. 39). Balthasar believes that for us who live in today's world remembrance of the saints needs to be refreshed. In this project he unites biography and theology with his personal esteem for contemplative life.

He explores the lives and writings of two 19th-century French Carmelite nuns. Both led brief but intense lives. Thérèse died at twenty-four from tuberculosis and Elizabeth at twenty-six from Addison's disease. Each left a legacy that includes autobiographical writings, letters, retreat meditations, poems, plays, prayers, and miscellaneous notes. Thérèse is of course the better known.

Balthasar's references are easy to compare with Thérèse's text, for her works are available in excellent English translations (*The Story of a Soul*, *Last Conversations*, and two volumes of *Letters*, all from ICS Publications). The sources for Elizabeth of the Trinity are more limited at present; only one of three French volumes is in translation (also from ICS Publications). Balthasar's treatment of these two contemporaries involves something of a contrast. He uses their own words as much as possible and has a deep comprehension of their life and spirituality. Sometimes, however, he presents their experience of God with a certain contrived objectivity. An example of this is the section on the Rule in the life of Thérèse. A Carmelite nun can only wonder if Balthasar ever read the Rule of St. Albert, a short treatise containing a few straightforward points given the early hermits on Mount Carmel to help them order their eremitical life. This is the Rule that Thérèse and Elizabeth lived and heard read each Friday during the noon meal. This Rule was the measure of their life. It filtered their understanding of the vows, prayer, silence and solitude, community life, virtue, the cross, suffering, and sin. Balthasar tends to present components of the spiritual life in a more conceptual fashion and assumes connections that may or may not be true.

This is evidenced in another tension of Balthasar's analysis: the contrast he sees between Christian faith and contemporary society or, more specifically, the friction he notes between religion and psychology. For Balthasar the saints' mission is the critical factor; their "poor personalities" are to be left in "obscurity" (p. 27). It is difficult to know if Balthasar discerned, among other things, the true nature of suffering that both Thérèse and Elizabeth knew in their experience of losing God's presence and consolation in the night of faith. This darkness and abandonment was real. The descriptions in their writing—candid expressions of struggle and unknowing—have through the years moved the hearts of many who struggle in prayer.

Generally, however, each woman is carefully drawn as a daughter of her Carmelite heritage with her own emphasis: Thérèse's discovery of the "little way of love" and Elizabeth's focus on the indwelling of God in the soul. What they name in their writings, and Balthasar offers in his discourse, is their experience of God, their experience of life, their understanding of the prophetic mission of contemplation. Balthasar says himself that Thérèse never wrote anything she had not tested in her deeds.

Balthasar knows the written works of Thérèse and Elizabeth thoroughly, and some of his translations of the French into German are interesting. In Elizabeth's "Prayer to the Trinity," for instance, he uses the startling word *herausverlocken* (entice, seduce) in place of "me faire sortir de vous" (usually translated "make me leave you"). So this particular line of her prayer reads: Let nothing disturb my peace or *entice me out of you*.

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The study is valuable. Balthasar's examination and analysis are presented in a manner which assists the reader in understanding these two mystics and in savoring the spirituality of each. Despite some minor miscues, Balthasar has done a service for all those who look to women like Thérèse and Elizabeth for inspiration. He describes their fidelity to the adventure which carries us into the heart of communion with God. This is a volume which gives voice to our desires; it is one with which to linger.

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"Come, Blackrobe": De Smet and the Indian Tragedy

John J. Killoren SJ. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. Pp. xv + 448. Cloth. \$29.95.

This book ably draws the relationships between the events of Father Peter De Smet's life, the disappearance of the native culture sustained by the buffalo, and the record of incompetence and perfidy of the United States government and army in their dealings with the Indians of the Great Plains.

Peter John De Smet was born in Belgium in 1800. As a young Jesuit he arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1823. St. Louis was still very much a French city in its people and ways, but the old fur-trapping economy was being transformed as the newly incorporated city became the equipping and starting point for American expansion across the plains and into the Rocky Mountains. As the settlers moved out, the army cleared the land of both buffalo herds and Indian tribes. The disappearance of the buffalo herds made the Indians almost entirely dependent on the government for sustenance and reduced the culture shaped by the buffalo hunt to folklore. As the native way of life came to an end, De Smet built a unique personal relationship with the Indians. He was instrumental also in forging their new relationship to their conquerors.

With the opening of the Northwest Territories after the Lewis and Clark expedition, President Thomas Jefferson thought to coerce the Indians by commerce rather than by war. The idea was to integrate them into the dominant economy and wean them from dependence on the buffalo. Dependency on manufactured goods would alter their relationship both to the land and to the manufacturers of the goods they would come to desire. Jefferson meant to destroy native culture, but peacefully. It became clear at every point of conflict, however, that the land was considered more important than the Indians.

After chronicling De Smet's early journeys west, Killoren situates his life and ministry between the two "Great Smokes," the conferences between government and Indian leaders designed to regulate the status of the native peoples as the land was being occupied by