

Mark D. Chapman and Vladimir Latinovic (eds), (2021) *Changing the Church: Transformation of Christian Belief, Practice, and Life*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, xxii + 376 pages. ISBN: 978-3-030-53424-0 (hbk), \$119.

It was the great nineteenth century theologian, John Henry Newman, who famously stated, 'In a higher world it may be otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.' This collection of essays is broadly oriented toward the reality of change in the church. The volume is dedicated to the late Irish-born theologian, Gerard Mannion, whose dramatic death but a few days short of his 49th birthday shocked the theological world. Mannion was an enormously productive and creative scholar who brought an entrepreneurial spirit to the often-staid world of academic theology. Although educated in the UK, much of his professional career was spent in the United States. Mannion possessed a prodigious intellect and, although he published on a wide range of topics, his greatest contributions came in the area of ecclesiology where he was a tireless advocate for the structural reform of the Catholic Church that he loved. The forty-one essays found in this volume cover a wide range of topics and, in keeping with Pope Francis' celebrated image of the polyhedron, when read together offer a rich, multi-faceted whole. At the same time, the large number of essays presents a challenge for a reviewer proposing a comprehensive assessment. Selective consideration of individual chapters is unavoidable.

As Chilean theologian Sandra Arenas notes, it is a sad reality that the global clerical sexual abuse scandal has profoundly undermined the credibility of the church. Cristina Lledo Gomez argues that this scandalous ecclesial wound goes beyond clerical sexual abuse, extending to the deeper wounds of colonial oppression. These scandals lead Anglican scholar Paul Avis to consider the possibility that the church, called to be a sign and instrument of the reign of God, has become a counter-sign of the kingdom. In consequence, Avis argues, a significant challenge facing the church today is no longer that of traditional theodicy, but rather an *ecclesial* theodicy that struggles to reconcile belief in a gracious God with the 'depths of depravity in God's church' (p. 246). This ecclesial theodicy demands a renewed commitment to corporate penance, ecclesial reform, and the adaptation of 'doctrine and practice to meet fresh challenges' (p. 249).

A second theme running through the entire project acknowledges the rise of historical consciousness and the consequent awareness that the church *can* change because it, in fact, *has* changed. This is signaled in the collection's very first essay as David Hunter recounts the dynamic changes in early Christian penitential practice that occurred in the third century North African church.

There church leaders like Cyprian of Carthage grappled with the pressing pastoral problem presented by 'lapsed' Christians who had abandoned the faith under threat of persecution and had offered sacrifice to the Roman emperor (or paid others to do so). As the persecutions abated, church leaders had to consider how best to respond pastorally to those who now wished to return to the church. Pastoral responses varied, Hunter notes, both synchronically and diachronically. Vladimir Latinovic presents us with the profound fluidity of the very categories of heresy and orthodoxy in the early centuries of Christianity. As often as not, he proposes, those terms were employed to mask hidden power dynamics and political machinations. Key figures once deemed 'orthodox' were later rendered 'heterodox' and vice-versa.

Several Roman Catholic authors in the collection further examine the historical reality of change, focusing their attention on two modern ecumenical councils. Peter Neuner maps the paradigmatic changes that transpired between Vatican I and Vatican II regarding understandings of papal authority. Susie Paulik Babka offers a fascinating account of changing Roman Catholic theological assessments of modern art from the neo-scholastic suspicions of the first half of the twentieth century to the modest theological reassessment of modern art in the Vatican II documents and, finally, the more full-throated affirmation of modern art by Pope Paul VI.

This heightened historical consciousness has allowed us to recognize the sad history of a church that too often functioned, as Karl Rahner once put it, as a 'European export firm'. Thus, the ecclesial significance of globalization marks yet another theme running throughout the volume. Nicolas Mumejian presents the compelling story of the twentieth century Protestant missiologist, Lesslie Newbigin, who pioneered a form of Protestant Christian mission that was sensitive to Christianity's imperialist tendencies. Italian theologian Sandra Mazzolini seems to agree with Arenas that the reality of globalization requires the 'epistemological assumption ... that local churches inform the global church' (p. 316). A commitment to the global character of the church leads Debora Tonelli to draw our attention to the work of African theologians who call for a 'decolonized theology' (p. 176). One of those African theologians, Stan Chu Ilo, insists that becoming an authentically global church requires repudiating 'dogmatic colonialism' while embracing 'an open narrative' that takes seriously the faith of ordinary believers (p. 169).

This heightened global awareness raises fundamental questions regarding the church's relationship to the world. Martyn Percy asks whether the time has come for the church to move beyond a preoccupation with 'its own managerial and organizational goals' to embrace a 'non-member based institution that seeks to serve society as a whole' (p. 141) and which acknowledges that God

might speak *from* the world and *to* the church. This more positive assessment of God's activity in the world extends to religious pluralism which several contributors offer as yet another positive agent of ecclesial change. Jason Welle recalls the evocative tale of St. Francis of Assisi visiting Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil during the Fifth Crusade. Welle sees in this tale, the historical details of which remain unknown, the imaginative possibility of interreligious friendship as an instrument for substantive ecclesial change. Leo Lefebure offers the little-known story of Roman Catholic participation in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions. Roberto Catalano reflects on the dramatic possibilities for change represented in the document, 'Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together', signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyib.

Indeed, one of the striking features of this volume lies in the prominence of Pope Francis who is consistently held up as an advocate for needed reform. Ilo highlights Francis' call for ecclesial humility, while Arenas notes the pope's vigorous condemnation of clericalism and Catalano draws our attention to his contributions to interreligious dialogue. Gioachino Campese lauds the pope's call for a 'pastoral and missionary conversion' regarding the contemporary refugee crisis (p. 148) and Matthew Eaton considers both the contributions and limits of the pope's ecological encyclical *Laudato Si*. Peter Phan draws inspiration from the distinctive teaching ministry of Francis and proposes a dramatic shift from an emphasis on doctrinal teaching by pope and bishops to that distinctive teaching rooted in the life witness of the laity. Both Peter De Mey and Brian Flanagan call our attention to the principle of synodality and the priority of a listening church, a central focus of this pontificate.

Although many of the essays in this volume offer fascinating accounts of ecclesial change and robust agendas for ecclesial reform, only a few address some of the more vexing theological challenges posed by the reality of ecclesial change and the demand for reform. Scott MacDougall offers a refreshing warning against a crypto-Pelagian assumption that it is either the individual believer or the church itself who is the agent of ecclesial reform. Rather, he insists, it is the Holy Spirit who is the true change agent; the principal task of the church and its members is to respond to the reforming impulse of the Spirit, always mindful that while the church may in some limited way anticipate God's reign it must never be identified with it. Massimo Faggioli invokes the work of Yves Congar who, more than a decade before Vatican II, acknowledged the necessity of ecclesial reform but also insisted on the need for a criteria to assess the authenticity of any proposed reform.

Judith Gruber draws on the political philosophy of Jacques Rancière to challenge the traditional theological focus on unity, harmony, consensus, and the stability of tradition. This penchant for unity and stability in fact suppresses

conflict, she contends, and overlooks the constructive role of dissent. Gruber's always provocative appropriation of critical theory in service of an 'open ecclesiology' effectively unveils the hegemonic, dominating exercise of power often enacted in the name of ecclesial harmony and consensus. Left unclear, however, is what room remains in such an open ecclesiology for even chastened normative claims within tradition. In fact, as much as this volume celebrates the reality of change in the church, there is relatively little said regarding the limits of change nor is there much offered regarding the possibility that the celebration of change for its own sake might present its own challenge for the church. A rare exception in this regard is Dennis Doyle's insistence that unity in difference remains a value in the church. Using Roman Catholic disagreement over birth control as a kind of case study, he draws our attention to the ways in which dissent and conflict, although sometimes healthy, might also draw from the well of deeply polarizing ideological and identitarian differences that are 'susceptible to "confirmation bias" and "identity-protection cognition"' (p. 112). Redirecting Doyle's concerns, one might wonder whether, in the name of reform, some may fall prey to the formation of 'sectarian identities that thrive on despising the other' (p. 117).

If a strength of this volume lies in the range of topics it considers, the decision to include so many entries imposed real limits on the authors' opportunity to pursue more in-depth explorations of their chosen topic. Nevertheless, the volume gives testimony to the fecundity of contemporary theological reflection on the reality of ecclesial change and offers a stirring tribute to a theologian who dedicated his life to the pursuit of the reform that is necessary for the church to fulfill its proper mission in the world.

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