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Bradford W. Hinze, Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments

Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments by Bradford W. Hinze,

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factions constituting the German Faith Movement did not exceed more than several tens of thousands. Compared to the German Christians Movement, with more than five hundred thousand members (Germany had roughly 60 million church members altogether), organized paganism must have appeared relatively small in size. To avoid deliberating on the Christian character of the German society, Poewe tries to overemphasize and generalize pagan outsider positions. The consequence of such a view becomes evident from a remark made in the introduction. In it Poewe declares that German Christians, correctly understood, “were not Christians but pagans” (8). Then, indeed, paganism must transmute into a universal threat.

Poewe’s essentialist understanding of Christianity generates a picture of paganism as the antithesis of Christianity in almost every regard. Disagreeing with the mainstream of scholarly works on anti-Semitic prejudices, Poewe fervently neglects any Christian influence on National Socialist Jew hatred (7–8, 14–15, 142). Quite the reverse, she holds paganism accountable for the anti-Semitism of the Nazis and finally responsible for the Holocaust. The recent trend to put the churches on the side of the victims is getting fresh support from Poewe’s examination. But by regarding Christians and Jews as equal targets of Nazi persecution, she plays down Nazi anti-Semitism, which then becomes a secondary phenomenon subsequent to the harassment of Christianity. A sentence like “National Socialists knew that being against Christianity was the most authentic and deepest form of anti-Semitism” (7) creates more confusion than the author probably realizes. Writing the history of religions as history of religious ideas materializes in the case of *New Religions and the Nazis* as a means of reproducing religious value judgments on a higher level of abstraction. This methodological inadequacy reduces the value of Poewe’s study significantly. Nevertheless, it contains a lot of information very likely unknown to many readers. It offers the opportunity to consider the important question of how paganism developed an influence in the German society and to what depth its impact went. There can be no doubt that some Nazi leaders had a zealous inclination toward an anti-Christian pagan worldview that is especially visible in the SS’s pagan tendencies. Poewe’s book provides a strong argument for scholars of religions to address the complex relationship between paganism, Christianity, and National Socialism.

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HINZE, BRADFORD W. *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments*. New York: Continuum, 2006. ix+326 pp. \$39.95 (cloth).

It may seem to many observers that Catholicism and dialogue are unlikely partners, but Bradford Hinze’s latest book comprehensively undermines any such assumptions. Nine of the ten chapters of this exhaustively researched work examine various kinds of dialogue, beginning from the local level and the work of parish pastoral councils and then moving upward and outward to examine dialogues with and among the U.S. bishops, the Rome Synod of Bishops, ecumenical conversations among different Christian churches, and, finally, the complex issue of interreligious dialogue. In each chapter Hinze lays out with admirable fairness the origins of the dialogue, its successes and failures, and concludes with a discussion of issues that have arisen from the history

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of the dialogue. The tenth chapter takes what is evidently a preliminary synthetic look at problems and progress under the headings of "Laments" and "Lessons Learned."

While Hinze's work establishes dialogue as an important component of the Catholic Church over the last forty years, the picture it paints is one of dialogue under stress. In particular, the author comes back time and again to the insistence in canon law that such things as parish or diocesan pastoral councils, diocesan synods, and even synods of bishops are "consultative only" in nature and have no formal deliberative role in the church's teaching or governance. He is candid too in his discussions of the ways in which various bishops both helped and hindered A Call to Action and the Common Ground Initiative. Hinze's painstaking analysis of the efforts of the Adrian Dominican Sisters to satisfy Vatican concerns over their understanding of authority is particularly illuminating. Women's religious orders, as Hinze rightly points out, have been in the forefront of developing ways of establishing fruitful dialogue in the years since Vatican II. Hinze's tale makes one cheer on the diplomacy of the sisters, weep for the frustrations they may have felt, and wonder at the pettifogging bureaucracy of the Roman Curia. The chapters on the Rome Synod of Bishops and on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue bring out even more clearly the two competing dialogical and hierarchical ecclesiologies. Hinze treats them with some success as two schools of dialogue, one classical and personalist, one more liberal. Then, in a devastating discussion of "classical" forms of dialogue in his final chapter, Hinze makes an effective case that the Socratic dialogue that the classicists evidently want to use as a model "serves to commend a hierarchical arrangement that may consult with theologians, representatives of the clergy, women religious, and the laity but is not required to do so." Platonic dialogues, in essence, "are not intended to chronicle real practices of dialogue as much as they are using a philosophical and aesthetic genre for conveying the philosopher's truth already known, or as an imaginative device for the philosopher to explore dimensions of his or her own position in order to deepen it" (261).

There are two respects in which this deeply important discussion might have been improved. First, most of the attention has gone to occasions of formal dialogue, and much of the dialogue in the church is not conducted in this way. What about the dialogue, for example, among the many thousands of members of Voice of the Faithful (an important Catholic lay organization almost entirely missing from this book), Call to Action (not to be confused with the 1970s episcopal initiative of the same name), and Futurechurch on the liberal side, or Catholics United for the Faith and Faithful Voice on the more conservative end? Admittedly, they are mostly not in dialogue with the hierarchy, but they are certainly in dialogue among themselves and cannot be left entirely out of consideration. Further, it would be enormously helpful though quite difficult to include the extensive dialogue that takes place on Internet blogs. Blogging is a phenomenon that is changing the character of American political debate and it may well come to have a similar impact on the church. A second, more theoretical gripe is in a way a compliment to the transparently clear presentation of the debates. Why must Hinze begin and end with tours through methodological theories? It is entirely conceivable that Gadamer or Habermas or whoever lies somewhere in Hinze's formative years and therefore may have influenced him, but I don't see their influence on this book. Invoking these German theological shades may be a species of academic deference,

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but it can also be obfuscatory. Hinze's work is too good to need to perch on the shoulders of these ponderous giants.

PAUL LAKELAND, *Fairfield University*.

DELROSSO, JEANA. *Writing Catholic Women: Contemporary International Girlhood Narratives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. ix+203 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

The agenda of Jeana DelRosso's book is to reconcile Catholicism and feminism through an investigation into girlhood narratives by contemporary women writers. Aiming at exploring those women writers' multivalent, ambiguous, and even internally conflicted attitudes toward Catholicism in its complex, multifaceted manifestations as an institution, a culture, and a category of difference, in chapter 1 DelRosso not only establishes the structuring principle of the book by adopting an inclusive definition of Catholic literature but also explains her focus on Catholic girlhood narratives as "highly charged sites of their differing gestures towards the religion" (6). DelRosso proceeds to examine the intersections of religion, gender, and literature within the intricately interweaving web of other related issues, such as "sexuality and madness, ethnicity and colonialism, race and class, mysticism and spirituality, humor and comedy" (6), which are consecutively treated from chapter 2 to chapter 6.

Among those thematic reading chapters, chapter 2 is particularly well researched and cogently argued. Besides resorting to feminist theology and feminist theory in general, DelRosso gleans insights from literary texts to argue that against the virgin/whore divide that characterizes Catholic womanhood, women need to integrate sexuality and spirituality—although this integration used to be regarded as madness—to achieve their full humanity. The author's recognition of the subtle role played by Catholicism as both the source of female insanity and its treatment contributes to the strength of this chapter. DelRosso points out that the use of Catholic elements such as sainthood in contemporary women's texts offers the female characters a chance to challenge the notion of female insanity—that is, to transcend the sane/insane binary in traditional religion as well as in modern medical diagnosis—and enables women writers "to write texts that resist such dualistic discourses while continuing to complicate women's relationships to Catholicism" (74).

Chapter 3 reads girlhood narratives by international women writers as sites of feminist awareness of the tension between Catholicism and the colonized cultures to present the image of the church as both oppressive and liberative. Chapter 4 concentrates on literary representation of parochial education for young black girls in the Americas. Within this limited scope, DelRosso observes that, due to the rampancy of racism, these narratives exhibit a negative attitude toward Catholicism. However, the author's primary goal of explicating the image of the church in its full complexity and ambiguity, although significant in itself, somehow grants only constrained space for the theoretical exploration of the intersection of gender and Catholicism with colonialism, ethnicity, race, and class.

The next two chapters discuss particular modes of writing as ways of empowerment. Chapter 5 celebrates the possibility of destabilizing sociopolitical reality for the authorization of women as provided by Catholic magical realism, which synthesizes both non-Christian religions and Catholic notions of grace, sainthood, and miracle. Chapter 6 explores the confluence of humor, gender,