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Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage

Oscar Cole-Arnal

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This study would be most valuable. At the same time it is interesting to note that Bland acknowledged the influence of Walter Rauschenbusch, and Hall was a pupil of Reinhold Niebuhr. Thus, we need to be aware of positive influences which have come from abroad. Indeed, they may be valuable as well. This is true with respect to Beckley's book. Though written largely for Americans south of the border, it provides us with usable material for our own reflections. Perhaps it might even inspire us to take up a similar challenge for "doing justice" in our own context.

Oscar Cole Arnal
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage
David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, editors
Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992
688 pp.

It is not at all surprising that a new collection of papal social encyclicals has appeared immediately after the centenary of Leo XIII's pioneer letter *Rerum Novarum* (1891). There have been a number of these over the years, and one might wonder why yet another has seen the light of day. One reason cited by the publisher (Orbis Books) is reason enough to justify this work. The Maryknoll firm, which has given us so many valuable works on liberation theology, calls *Catholic Social Thought* "the single most comprehensive available collection of primary documents from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) to John Paul II's recent *Centesimus Annus* (1991)". This claim is not excessive and underscores the most valuable aspect of the book.

Catholic Social Thought is indeed comprehensive in two ways. Unlike many previous collections of papal social encyclicals, this documentary work contains the full texts of the papal letters rather than the habitual extensive excerpts of its predecessors. Thus the reader has at her or his disposal the complete primary documentation. This is no mean achievement and alone justifies the appearance of this anniversary work. Also, it is comprehensive in that it contains the full range of pontifical social encyclicals from the first century of social Catholicism's formal existence. However, the positive features of the book do not end here. The introductory pieces for the documents are the best that I have seen in such studies. They provide an excellent, though brief, picture of the social and historical context out of which they came, and they summarize effectively the salient points of each letter within the framework of the evolution of papal teaching. Finally, the book contains two recent and important American pastoral letters of great import.

In spite of these positive features, it is also important to note some of the book's limitations. The inclusion of the United States documentation, though perhaps justified by Orbis being an American press, reduces the genuinely catholic character of the book. Where are the other, equally or even more important, social documents of the church? Surely Medellín and Puebla produced materials more earth-shattering within Catholicism than those by the U.S. bishops. Indeed, the Dutch, the French and the Canadian episcopate created letters similar to the American ones and did so in advance of the latter. Of course, no one book can include all the pertinent documentation, and choices must be made. Nonetheless, the book's subtitle *The Documentary Heritage* is misleading. It would have been far better to include solely papal documents or an excerpted section showing the wide range of episcopal social documents. Otherwise call the book *A Documentary Sampling* or *The United States Perspective*. The book is to be commended for its willingness to be more critical of papal insights than previous works, yet there seems to be also an ideological thread holding the book's commentary together. To this reviewer, this ideology appears to be predominantly liberal, middle class and American, and in that sense, it has both strengths and limitations.

By way of conclusion I would reiterate the high quality of this collection above its English language predecessors, while at the same time, I would urge all readers of both the documents and the commentary to avail themselves of critical tools in their reflection upon what they read. An excellent companion for that latter task is the fine work of M.-D. Chenu entitled *La "Doctrine sociale" de l'Église comme idéologie* (1979).

Oscar Cole Arnal
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Partners with God: A Celebration of Human Sexuality

David Thomas
Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, Inc., 1988
95 pages \$10.95

The discussion of sexuality raises the anxiety level for many, especially when the discussion takes place within the church. David Thomas, an Anglican priest, facilitates that discussion in this book by providing an approach to the subject which emphasizes sexuality as a gift from God, a gift which, when used with care and respect, can bring deep pleasure and satisfaction. His positive approach to sexuality is stated very clearly in the title of his book, *Partners with God: A Celebration of Human Sexuality*.

Drawing on the Song of Songs, Thomas points out that love-making freely accepted and given with tenderness, approaches a spiritual union