

Posudek na bakalářskou práci Evy Flachowsky „Vývoj spirituality celibátu s důrazem na současné přístupy“

This work contains an abstract, a glossary, five chapters and a bibliography. Technically it meets the requirements for a Bachelor work.

The dissertation seeks to show how changes in theological anthropology (with especial reference to John Paul II and Olivier Clement) have influenced contemporary spiritualities of celibacy, with the major focus on Roman Catholic clergy. To do this the author looks briefly at celibacy and spirituality, before introducing the two theologies of the body. Her fourth chapter looks at issues in celibacy, especially problems, and she concludes with a final chapter in which she wants to bring together the work.

Positively, the work contains evidence of fairly good and relevant reading, and the individual parts are in themselves sometimes good. This is true of the second chapter on spirituality and celibacy, and of the third chapter on John Paul II and Olivier Clement. In a short space of time, it seems to me that the major issues are covered, on the whole accurately. The least convincing part here is that on spirituality. This is one of the problems in the work. For example, the author gives three definitions of the “Spirit/spirit” in spirituality from the Dictionary of Spirituality (see p.7). This is useful, but she then rather ignores the second one, taken from Greek philosophy, which however is perhaps the most relevant for her discussion of celibacy.

The intuition that theologies of the body have an impact on understandings of and the living out of celibacy among Roman Catholic clergy seems to me a very good one, and in looking at John Paul and Olivier Clement I think that the author has chosen two relevant writers, although obviously for most Roman Catholic seminarians / clergy a pope will have more authority than a French Orthodox theologian.

Although there is much to admire in the intuition behind the work and the effort which has gone into it, I have several questions. As I have already mentioned, one is to do with what the author really means about the spirituality of celibacy. As far as I could tell, really the work is more to do with either the theology or practice of celibacy. Is there actually such a thing as the spirituality of celibacy and if so what does it consist in?

Some of the discussion of celibacy and its problems seemed to me a little lacking in depth. This was especially the case in the discussion over the obligation to celibacy for Roman Catholic clergy. The author notes at one point that priestly vocation and what she terms the gift of celibacy are not identical, but in fact she then generally treats celibacy as a necessary pre-condition for knowing one has a priestly vocation. It is, of course, not true that all Roman Catholic clergy are celibate, as the case of married Anglican clergy who have been re-ordained as Catholic priests in England shows.

I think that the author wants to argue that celibacy has a value, both for the celibate and for the rest of the church, because it allows for living out one's sexuality in a way which can enhance service of one's neighbour. But of course it would be logically wrong to assume that only those who are celibate can serve their neighbour, or that this is necessarily the best way for priestly service to take place. Here some engagement with the majority of Christian traditions who allow ordained ministers to be married would have helped.

It would also have been good if the struggle involved in celibacy had been taken a bit more seriously. This might have allowed for a deeper appreciation of the value of celibacy and also for the role of prayer in coming to knowledge of self and God.

Despite the criticisms, this work is of a sufficient standard to pass. I would recommend a mark between C and D, depending on how well the student can respond in the oral defence.

v Praze 4.6.2008

Tim Noble