

ent transcendentals of beauty, goodness, truth, and unity. In "Truth in Religion and Truth of Religion," Dupré depicts religious truth as a kind of deepening of vision, a constant conversion towards Being's transcendent depth of truth and goodness. One is "in the truth" before one can simply "know" the truth; it is a way of being rather than simply a way of conceiving.

In "Experience and Interpretation: A Philosophical Reflection on Schillebeeckx's Theology," Dupré considers the question of how revelation can unfold within history, within the horizons provided by the varying cultural conditions of different ages, without thereby losing its historical particularity or its objectivity; experience and interpretation are inseparable from one another, he argues, and both continuously develop over time. And in "Religious Symbolism and Aesthetic Form," a brief and elegant essay on the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, he considers the expressive power of beautiful form, the power of creation to manifest the depth of Being's mystery, and the way in which the Christian appropriation of beauty as a transcendental is altered by the crucified radiance of Christ. And in every case, Dupré's theme is light; his is a classic phenomenological concern for illumination and concealment, splendor and obscurity, the visible and the invisible, and the mystery of vision.

THIS IS ALSO to say, incidentally, that Dupré's theme is darkness: the darkness of evil and suffering, the darkness of the *via negativa*, the dazzling darkness of mystical union, and the dark night of modern humanity's interior retreat from faith. Of the mystery of evil no "explanation" is offered, of course, no theodicy, but Dupré takes the problem as the occasion for one of the few concretely dogmatic proposals to be found in this book: he insists upon the futility, in the face of cosmic suffering, of theories of atonement whose grammar is one of mere ransom and satisfaction, and upon the necessity therefore of seeing in the Incarnation the revelation

of a God who suffers with and in the suffering of his creatures, and whose power and perfection are not threatened—but demonstrated—by this very capacity to enter into the conditions of creaturely estrangement from him. And in a move of great subtlety (and charity), Dupré suggests that in the ever more fragmentary and private realms of symbolic imagination that are so characteristic of modern humanity's experience of truth, within the desert of the isolated ego, and even in the realm of our pandemic atheist disenchantment, there is an analogy of and (perhaps) invitation to the apophatic language of the mystics, who knew how the privation of names for God can also be a preparation to bear the presence of a mystery that always surpasses each of the symbols in which it variously arrays itself, a presence known most fully as the wound of an unutterable and transcendent love.

One could continue reciting the virtues of this volume at far greater length. At the last, however, it need only be said that, for so slender a volume, and one written with such lucidity and such restraint, Dupré's book has a remarkably suggestive force; it carries about it a kind of

mysterious surfeit of meaning. Each essay implies many more questions that need to be asked, and opens up numerous and unexpected perspectives upon those it directly engages. And it is worth noting (though anyone familiar with Dupré's work in the past will expect nothing else) that each essay is characterized at once by the rigor of its thought and the limpid prose of its exposition. Not to wax too fulsome, but it is a beautiful book and one that merits far more than one reading. Issues of such magnitude and difficulty are rarely presented in so obliging a form.

## Toward a Religious Humanism

SACRED PASSION: THE ART OF WILLIAM SCHICKEL. By GREGORY WOLFE. *University of Notre Dame Press*. 176 pp. \$95 cloth, \$48 paper.

Reviewed by Allen G. Weakland

SEVENTY-FIVE years ago, T. S. Eliot said, "What is needed of art is a simplification of life into something rich and strange." Nearly a half-century later, Jacques Barzun

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echoed these sentiments in his Mellon Lectures when he said that the artifacts and ideas of advanced civilizations had become a "dreadful clutter," the antidote to which was to move towards "some form of primitivism." Gregory Wolfe, editor of *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* and author of *Malcolm Muggeridge* and *The New Religious Humanists*, has discovered in the relative obscurity of Loveland, Ohio, an artist of genuine spirituality who is showing the way towards such a primitive simplicity.

William Schickel, born in Stamford, Connecticut, in 1919 and reared in Ithaca, New York, was never far from the concerns of the art community. His grandfather and namesake was a prolific architect who, among other commissions, designed Manhattan's St. Ignatius Loyola Church and the landmark Century Building. His mother, née Agnes Ryan, was an amateur artist of some depth, but died when

ALLEN G. WEAKLAND, the former editor of *The New American Review: A Journal of Civility and the Arts*, is co-author of *The Private Albert Einstein*.

William was only three.

As a Catholic in WASPish Ithaca, William came to find solace in boxing as a way of striking back at local bullies who mocked his faith. And so he was attracted to the University of Notre Dame—the Fighting Irish had an excellent boxing program. Once there, he fell sway to the Fine Arts department, where a resurgent neo-Thomism, trumpeted by Professor Frank O'Malley, captured the imagination of the young Schickel with its vision of Christian humanism.

The philosophical lights of this movement—Jacques Maritain, Yves Simon, and Etienne Gilson—gradually began to shape Schickel's approach to art. Their vision sought to restore the imbalances that were seen to have arisen between nature and grace, faith and reason, the sacred and the profane. Nonetheless they excoriated artistic traditionalism, going so far as to become firm believers in abstraction in artistic representation. In those days, the "Culture Wars" hinged not on abortion or homosexual rights, but on whether Abstract Art was an anarchistic or nihilistic indulgence, or whether it was truly a leap forward in free expression. Schickel's

intellectual mentors took a positive stance towards abstractionism, and Schickel took up their fight.

SCHICKEL'S WORK—represented here by 175 full-color photographs—brings us face-to-face with the concerns of our own culture war, especially as it is manifested in clashes between traditionalists and liberals in the Church over the past three decades. Wolfe early-on confronts this dichotomy directly. Remark-ing on Schickel's strong allegiance to the Catholic Church and his steadfast fidelity to the Magisterium, the author insists that Schickel has "refused to live in the past." "To Schickel, there is an important difference between being a conservative and being a reactionary. The conservative, he believes, must find a language in which to make timeless truths understood in the present. The reactionary, on the other hand, clings to an old language from which the spirit has fled."

For Schickel, that conservative language is found in the ordinary, everyday realities, a reflection of his belief that "the sacramental life of the Church is a recapitulation of the daily rituals of eating and drinking, working and resting, gathering and dispersing." Thus Schickel, whose versatile work has encompassed painting, sculpture, stained glass, furniture, and architectural design, in one of his most inspiring works turned a simple barn in his own Loveland into a quite reverent place of worship. Known as the Grailville Oratory, the building emphasizes the original post, truss, and beam structure, and uses the original windows for the clerestory. A shafted light well, open to natural sunlight, stands above the altar and floods it with light like grace descending. But, as Wolfe points out, it "also echoes the shaft in the barn where the hay was thrown down to the cattle. Out of such homely metaphors Schickel fashions his religious art."

Ideologues in the culture wars might object to such confusion of the sacred and profane, perhaps forgetting that Jesus was born in a

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stable. How often have we heard criticisms of the carbon-copy, mass-produced factories and gymnasiums that pass for churches these days? But seeing Schickel's work reminds us of the difference between taste and tackiness.

AGAIN AND AGAIN, Schickel's works depend on simple materials, simply constructed, such as plain, thin iron crosses, granite altars, ceramic holy water fonts, and oaken choir stalls for his renovation of Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky, the oldest Trappist Monastery in the United States, and home, once, to Thomas Merton.

Another commission, the National Shrine of Philippine Duchesne in St. Charles, Missouri, was close to Schickel's heart. He had been diagnosed in 1952 with incurable cancer of the lymph system. But after a pilgrimage to St. Charles to pray to (then-Blessed) Philippine, his cancer vanished. When faced with renovating the shrine, really just the transept and a section of the nave of an originally intended basilica, Schickel perhaps had G. K. Chesterton's dictum in mind: the key to authentic reform is the need to return to the original form and discover in it what is relevant for the present. Taking the cold and forbidding shell of the original structure, he placed the sanctuary and altar in the center of the building, allowing the congregation to face the altar from three directions. This was one year after the completion of Vatican II, and Schickel's design served as a vanguard for myriad churches-in-the-round that have followed since. In his renovation, a striking baldacchino of copper, brass, aluminum, and steel rods over the altar serves the same purpose as does the light shaft in the Grailville Oratory.

Wolfe was criticized before for falling under the spell of his subject in the Muggeridge biography, overinflating Muggeridge's stature as a Christian apologist. Although art books of this sort do generally fall into the "groupie" category, one might have hoped that the author

had accepted this criticism and had been somewhat less agog at Schickel's every expression. Take, for instance, Schickel's stained glass designs. Almost without fail, he turns his back on representational scenes, opting rather for abstract, geometric patterns out of his feeling that traditional biblical scenes or saintly figures create a distraction to true worship. But this should prompt the question, unasked by Wolfe—a distraction to whom? To a man of obvious intellectual and analytical sensibilities? Or to the average parishioner who "doesn't know much about Art, but knows what he likes"? For example, in his Gethsemani Abbey restoration, Schickel's geometric stained glass, sharply triangular, is described by Wolfe: "The general movement remains vertical, a rising motion of the spirit toward God." But does the average worshiper see past shards of colored glass to the intended symbolism? If, as I suspect, he doesn't, isn't this, then, a larger distraction—this uneasy feeling of niggling irregularity—than comfortable old shoes like St. Peter or an imploring Christ beckoning from the windows? A greater critical distance would well serve Wolfe's project of promoting religious humanism.

IRONICALLY, in those few works in which Schickel does represent humanity realistically, the effect is extremely meaningful and touching. For instance, in one of his secular projects—the Kane County Correctional Complex in Aurora, Illinois—Schickel included a photographic wall depicting Solzhenitsyn, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Johnny Cash, reminding inmates with a neighboring plaque that "The people shown in these photos all suffered confinement and went on to do great things." Similarly, on a wall accessible only to prison staff, photos of Solzhenitsyn, St. Paul, Day, and others serve as reminders to the staff that, occasionally, some people are wrongfully incarcerated.

Schickel, approaching eighty, still labors at his crafts. (He is currently

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS  
Editor-in-Chief

working on three different commissions in three different states.) Overall, he has produced an impressive body of work which, thankfully, demonstrates that liturgical arts (which Schickel prefers to call "ritual arts" because "it stresses the way in which these objects participate in the drama of religious ritual") can be tastefully done in a modern idiom without lapsing into the triteness or sentimentality that plagues so many of our newer churches. Even so, Schickel has been criticized in the past for abetting liberalism via relativism and lack of commitment, an argument he counters by appealing to the distinction between doctrine, which is permanent, and discipline (ritual, language, and arts), which changes with the times. Wolfe notes how this brings to mind St. Augustine's description of God's beauty as "ever ancient, ever new." In Schickel's case, Wolfe has done us all a service in educating us about this simple and dedicated and faith-full laborer.

## Just Friends

**FOR FIDELITY: HOW INTIMACY AND COMMITMENT ENRICH OUR LIVES.**  
By CATHERINE M. WALLACE. *Knopf*.  
177 pp. \$22.

*Reviewed by J. Budziszewski*

*FOR FIDELITY* is written for baby boomers who got married without knowing what they were doing and are now trying to explain the matri-

monial ideal to their kids—kids who are, predictably, even more antinomian than they are. As a defense of marital faithfulness, the book is pretty thin gruel. On the other hand it clearly answers a fascinating question you might not have thought of asking: What can still be said for faithfulness if you part from all the ancient wisdom but can't quite bring yourself to part from the sexual revolution? From this point of view, the interesting thing about Catherine Wallace's book is not that her argument is thin, but that it can be made at all.

Mrs. Wallace is so ambivalent about her own premises that great care is needed to sort out what she means. She calls herself a Christian, tells traditional stories, and employs logical reasoning, yet in the end she rejects not only revelation and tradition, but reasoning itself. New Testament sexual teachings are nothing but "dirt and greed"; tradition is a "hierarchical structure of repression, exclusion, and exploitation"; and it's better to "trust our guts" than to think things out, because "fidelity doesn't make any logical sense at all, and were reality commensurate with logic, then matrimony as I imagine it would be entirely illusory." The

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fact that she has just made a claim about reality by offering a logical argument seems to escape her.

What she does embrace is more startling still, because it includes everything that makes fidelity seem unreasonable: passion as holy, self as body, desire as need. For the first, she quotes approvingly from John Keats, who was "certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination." For the second, though she admits that the proposition "I am a body" doesn't "work . . . all the time for everyone," nevertheless she insists on its truth; "all energy is bodily," and nothing that cannot be explained in bodily terms is true. Weirdest of the three is her view that intimacy requires "the acknowledgement of one another's needs at face value, without question. Your needs are no longer merely yours but as nearly my own as possible. If you say you need something, I need for you to have it—without second-guessing, without cautious, evaluative skepticism."

The examples she gives are relatively innocuous—she knows one couple in which the husband has a "need" to climb rocks, and another in which the wife has a "need" to make arrangements of them. But what happens when one spouse claims to "need" something degrading, immoral, or contrary to the "needs" of the other? If Mr. Wallace said he "needed" a little on the side, would Mrs. Wallace "need" for him to have it? So far as I can see, the answer would be yes. The only reason she gives for her amazing view is that a declaration of a need may reflect a deeper need that cannot be declared. No doubt that is true; but it in no way follows that for spouses to give each other whatever they want is always good for either. One of the things spouses need most deeply is to be accountable to each other.

MRS. WALLACE'S definition of fidelity can be summarized in four phrases: one at a time, of either sex, only while it lasts, no vows needed. Let's take a look at each element.

"One at a time" is the core of the

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