

Despite the grisly nature of Luisa's predilections, there is more than a little comedy in Redworth's account of how she proceeded to get her own way, retaining her inheritance in defiance of the provisions of her father's will, cajoling the Society of Jesus into supporting her English venture, and eventually setting up house in a London she regarded as inhospitable and comparatively uncivilised. Redworth supposes that the Jesuits were motivated to help Luisa at least in part by the promise of her money, dedicated to the Jesuit mission in England. He also speculates that they reckoned that in the event of Luisa gaining her object and being put to death, the resultant diplomatic scandal would precipitate a war with Spain that would bring Catholicism back to England. This seems far-fetched: the organisers of the English Mission are much more likely to have worried about the danger that a woman so bent on martyrdom might pose to the secrecy of their priests. In the event, Luisa did preserve her silence about the travelling Jesuits and sometimes provided a Resistance-type service for them. She was brave and resourceful, intelligent and indubitably pious, but one cannot help entertaining a doubt of her being entirely agreeable. To be a martyr she needed to be noticed and she would pick quarrels with people in the street, one of which resulted in her being arrested and kept briefly in prison, an experience which she described as a foretaste of martyrdom. The Spanish ambassador, Pedro de Zúñiga, exasperatedly questioned what was the point of bickering with shopkeepers, "with little authority and fewer results", and one is inclined to agree with him. She did a lot of arguing and by her own account was instrumental in convincing the priest John Drury to refuse James I's Oath of Allegiance. This was not necessarily well done: James' oath was a much milder affair than Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy, and it is arguable that Catholics could have taken it with a clear conscience, but Luisa's counsel was always for open war. Never actually achieving martyrdom herself, she eventually found a role as a secret collector, preserver and supplier to the faithful of the body parts of martyred Catholics.

"She-apostle" was a derogatory term applied to her, of which the "she" part indicates that her opponents thought she was acting outside the natural capacity of her sex. Redworth's feminist approach celebrates her for doing what she wanted to do in a male-dominated society, but a feminist approach should also take her and her aspirations seriously. Was Luisa's work worth doing, did she actually do anything significant to ease the lives of the thousands of ordinary Catholics who simply wanted unmolested access to the Mass and the sacraments? Luisa's energy was fuelled by her fierce allegiance to the Church and her deeply personal desire to achieve some kind of self-immolating union with God, but her story does not tell us that she ever spoke much of the same God's love and mercy.

Nevertheless, the possibility of finding Luisa herself slightly repellent does not derogate from the value of Glyn Redworth's book, which is full of fascinating detail, diligently researched. Although rather over-colloquial at times, his style moves easily between Luisa's autobiography, contemporary records and his own narrative. Despite what one can only describe as the weirdness of its subject, *The She-Apostle* is an engrossing and enjoyable read about a strange and little-known area of English and Spanish history.

CECILIA HATT

WHAT IS TRUTH? FROM THE ACADEMY TO THE VATICAN by John M. Rist
(Cambridge University Press, 2008). Pp. xiv + 361, n. p.

John Rist is a noted historian of ancient thought who has also made major contributions to New Testament studies (on the Synoptic problem) and patristics (especially Augustine), as well as to modern ethical theory. That range of topics

gives a broad idea of the data marshalled in this book. Nevertheless, it will be a hard one for librarians to catalogue. The overall subject is not immediately obvious, and the literary genre seems novel. Unique to *What is Truth?* is the formal perspective in which its data are entertained. At the end of the Introduction the author himself give us a clue of a kind. This substantial piece of writing is a developed version of the brief apologia for his conversion to Catholic Christianity included in an American essay collection from the 1990s, *Philosophers who Believe*. More fundamentally, and indeed more importantly (as no doubt Rist would be the first to agree), it is a plea for the flourishing of a certain kind of intellectual-cum-moral culture in the Church where the author has made his spiritual home.

Programmatically, the book is to consider six themes, of which five are well enough defined if at first sight ill-assorted. They are: anthropology; theodicy; aesthetics; the emergence of the papacy; and political theory. This is a bricolage with no obvious unity of topic, but it is held together by a unified concern which will in due course emerge. The sixth chosen topic – ostensibly, the Catholic Church ‘in “modern” and “post-modern” culture’ – is more of an omnium-gatherum but insofar as it has a single focus, it is epistemology.

In the opening chapter, whose basic shape can serve as a guide for much of the rest, Rist identifies the heart of Catholic anthropology as the doctrine of man as made in the image of God. This is man as *homo*, not *vir*; so what is the role within the doctrine of gender difference? In seeking to answer this question, Rist develops his characteristic method – and reveals his governing preoccupations. By rehearsing, with a panoply of classical and patristic scholarship, the various ways in which ancient theories of sexual difference helped or hindered the Church in making use of her own Scriptures, he seeks to show two things. First, the faith of the modern Church (which in this area affirms the equality but complementarity of men and women) has a history of struggle with the issues involved. Secondly, if that history has been one of ‘not false but incomplete’ construals of revelation, may we not suppose that any happy future for Catholicism will lie in a continuing conversation between truths and values found outside the Church with the ‘core’ saving truth found within it? ‘External’ truths (my terminology) may play a useful role in triggering our recognition of their ‘internal’ counterparts as well as, more generally, serving to broaden our horizons.

This formula – and its attendant concerns and convictions – is then applied to the other four chief themes, with the last being, as already mentioned, something of a sport, not only through the softness of its focus but because its subject matter (the Church in the distinctively modern/post-modern context) does not easily lend itself – by definition – to illumination from the ancient world. By contrast, the method fits well with the subject-matter of the intervening chapters, where Rist considers the implications of early Western controversies over fallen human nature for a doctrine of the justice and mercy of God; the moral and religious value (or disvalue) of concern with beauty; the development of the Petrine office at Rome; and notions of a Christian politics, from Chrysostom to the 2004 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church*.

The passion and erudition brought to these topics express Rist’s hope that the Catholic Church will become an ever more plenary embodiment of truth, goodness and beauty. But he is also driven by a corresponding fear of the morphing of the Catholic Church into a sect. A Church whose role in public culture is, by and large, diminishing, at least in the ‘first world’, may well be tempted to turn inwards, and close its gates against the greater world outside. Since Rist is an historian of ideas, the form in which the prospect of ghettoisation chiefly strikes him is unwillingness to accept the aid philosophy can supply in decocting the contents of the revealed divine word. His sharpest criticism of his co-religionists is ‘traditionism’, or a ‘fundamentalism of tradition’, whose vice consists in an

a prioristic reading of the history of doctrine such that the gains which actually derive from a wider intellectual conversation are ascribed instead to the interior fruitfulness of the faith once delivered to the saints.

The questions *What is Truth?* arouses in this reviewer's mind are twofold. The first concerns fundamental theology. A dogmatic theologian will wonder whether at work here is an incomplete understanding of the concept of revelation itself. The notion of the unsurpassable fullness of revelation given with the definitive Mediator is the idea of a global whole, exhibiting a wonderful richness of internal relations as well as a myriad connecting-points not only to the previous biblical history but also to creation at large. Is this only eschatological, a truth to be awaited or (as in Rist's picture) dialectically induced? Or is it also Pentecostal, a gift transacted, and from the start fructifying in apostolic minds? The question cannot be answered simply by historical-critical methods – though even with those methods more could be made of the proto-credal summaries found in the New Testament than Rist sometimes allows. It requires for an answer participation in the corporate response to revelation of the 'bridal' – the covenantal – Church. What John Rist terms historical apriorism I would prefer to see as what I have called elsewhere a 'hermeneutic of recognition'. The developed pattern of Catholic doctrine should be a guide to discerning the shape intrinsically emerging in earlier more inchoate forms.

My second question concerns the conversation partners Rist seeks for the Church. This review may have given the impression that *What is Truth?* has straightforwardly adopted the 'seminar in permanent session' view of the Church, not the least of whose inconveniences is its disregard of inappropriate extra-ecclesial influences that may lead Christians astray. But careless accommodationism (which is, we gather, a particular sin of clergy and former clergy) draws down in fact the author's ire. On the 'radical alternative' to secular modernity he would commend, compatibility with the rule of faith handed down by papal and episcopal guardians belongs to truth's being. But by what criterion are we to select our dialogue-partners for truth's advancement, its fuller well-being? The question is hardly a bagatelle, granted Rist's own admission that conversation with philosophy has not always enhanced the faith. Sometimes, as he admits, it has damaged it, delaying its right articulation. For Rist himself, it is the 'divine inspiration' of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus with which, above all, we are to enjoy ecumenical relations.

Despite the voracious character of the author's intellectualism, *What is Truth?* seems to me to be, *au fond*, a plea for Christian Hellenism. Perhaps the author would not find himself so much of a stranger as he thinks in the Orthodox Church.

AIDAN NICHOLS OP

THE SENSE OF CREATION: EXPERIENCE AND THE GOD BEYOND by Patrick Masterson (*Ashgate*, Aldershot, 2008). Pp. x +153 incl. index, UK£50

In this subtle and important book Patrick Masterson [PM] deals with three questions: what is meant by the term 'God'; does God (i.e. the being meant by the term) exist; if so, how is the world related to him? He begins by remarking that the belief – which is a religious belief before it is a philosophical conclusion – that the world was created by God is fundamental to the three related Near Eastern monotheisms (p. 1). The remark is obvious but too often overlooked or thought insignificant. Genesis begins: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep." The intellectual history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam,