

Someday M.'s complete works will appear in a series of numerous, almost endless, volumes on bookshelves (or on the Internet). Then we will be able to read all 250 of his essays! The editor of this volume has given us an excellent foretaste of what is yet to come.

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Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World. By Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M. Religious Life in a New Millennium 3. New York: Paulist, 2013. Pp. xxxiv + 763. \$39.95.

This is the final volume of Schneiders's trilogy developing ministerial religious life as "a Christian mystical-prophetic lifeform, given to the church by the Holy Spirit for the sake of the world, and constituted by perpetual profession of consecrated celibacy, evangelical poverty, and prophetic obedience lived in transcendent community and ministry" (615). Having addressed celibacy in volume 2, S. here considers religious life as missioned to the world and offers a reconceptualization of the vows of poverty and obedience reflective of the transformation that has occurred in apostolic congregations. S. articulates a coherent vision of religious life firmly rooted in the gospel, illustrative of the seriousness with which religious approached the three-pronged task of Vatican II (*ressourcement*, development, *aggiornamento*) and attentive to the challenges religious confront today.

S. constructs a theology to support the "world engagement" of apostolic religious who, even before the council, began to identify ministry as "absolutely central to their vocation and identity" (271). Since religious historically defined themselves as "fleeing the world," the council's positive turn toward the world "inaugurated a transformation in self-understanding, life and mission" in religious life (603). S. critiques and reappropriates religious life as a "renunciation of the world." Focusing on the Gospel of John, S. establishes the scriptural use of "world" to refer foremost to the good creation loved by God (47). Negatively, "world" is also used as a metaphor that "refers to an imaginative construction of reality according to the coordinates of evil" (47). It is this "world" which religious "die to" (47–48). Instead, religious "undertake to live the Resurrection in a radical way within history . . . by creating and living within an 'alternate world' which derives its coordinates exclusively from the Gospel" (68). This "alternate world" provides the rich conceptual foundation from which S. unfolds "evangelical poverty" and "prophetic obedience" as structuring an alternative economic and political world in community and ministry.

S. presents evangelical poverty as structuring a "gift economy" rooted in the biblical vision of interdependence and reliance on God. Engaging in work that is also ministry and service to those most in need is central to the apostolic mission

of religious. Rather than allowing financial concerns to obscure this, S. underlines creative planning and embracing “scarcity with the confidence in providence” that has historically characterized most congregations (285). She develops “poverty of spirit” in the context of the “quest for God” that is the interior orientation of all asceticism. It is this movement toward union with God that allows individuals and communities to let go of expectations to “succeed in human terms” (347). This volume, with its preceding volumes, will serve congregational visioning and planning processes as a spiritual resource for religious in every stage of life.

The vow of obedience is developed by S. as prophetically announcing the reign of God through the creation of an alternative “politics of freedom based on equality and interdependence, in contrast to a politics of domination and individualism” (433). Of particular interest is her description of the prophetic role of religious in the church. S. identifies the religious and societal forces that merged and moved women religious faster than any other group in the church “toward a new understanding of power, authority, and freedom” (460). Appropriating “biblical and conciliar egalitarianism” (457), congregations created community based on mutual and relational authority that stands as a prophetic alternative to authority as the “power over” model often evoked by the hierarchy (459). This witness to an alternative way of being church has elicited tensions with ecclesiastical authorities. Her careful distinction between clergy and religious resists equating such conflicts with “disobedience” and provides a theological framework for clarifying the limits to the authority that church officials have in relationship to religious congregations and their members and when interference should be resisted (508–10).

S. does not shy away from approaching sensitive issues including the influence of materialism and individualism as authoritarian structures governing how religious lived the vows of poverty and obedience were replaced with processes requiring communal and personal discernment. In view of painful experiences in the church that have led to questions about this relationship, S. challenges religious to hold to the ecclesial nature of religious life. Her reflections on the encounter with science and interreligious dialogue and the corresponding challenge of integrating valuable contemporary insights while maintaining “Christian faith in its explicitly Catholic form” (52) as intrinsic to religious life provides impetus for vital, if difficult, conversations.

S. writes out of the experience of women religious in apostolic congregations in the United States. She acknowledges a “wide pluralism among Religious” and that her “interpretation has no claim to exclusivity or superiority” (614). Even so, this extensive and multifaceted study will influence reflection on the charism of religious life in the church for decades to come. Anyone interested in religious life, contemporary ecclesiology, and movements of reform within the church will find this volume valuable.

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