

entrenchment, and it would be very useful in courses on contemporary American society and religion, Christian social ethics, and current politics in the United States. It will give many of its readers pause, but it rewards sustained engagement with an impressive vision of what community life could be if Americans collectively share a will to shift it together toward the good.

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Modern Catholic Family Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations. Edited by Jacob M. Kohlhaas and Mary M. Doyle Roche. Georgetown University Press, 2024. xii + 281 pages. \$49.95 paperback.

Modern Catholic Family Teaching is an excellent compendium of analysis and commentary on a selection of Roman Catholic magisterial documents addressing gender and sexual morality, marriage and family life, children and education, and the social mission and support of families. It is required reading for anyone studying theological anthropology, sexual ethics, gender, family, and moral theology in the Catholic tradition.

Each chapter in *Modern Catholic Family Teaching* is an analysis of a relevant document or the sources for this documentary tradition. Chapters are organized chronologically under sections named for the pope seated at each document's publication, with added chapters on homosexuality and the sex abuse crisis under the section on John Paul II. The volume begins with Leo XIII and *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* and finishes with Francis and "Male and Female He Created Them," a document of the Congregation for Catholic Education (now part of the Dicastery for Culture and Education). The analyses of these documents, the historical context provided, and the commentary offered are all excellent and even-handed. The volume is similar in structure to the earlier *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, edited by Kenneth Himes in 2004 (and updated in 2018), also published by Georgetown University Press.

The opening chapters provide context for Catholic family teaching, focusing on scripture, natural law, ecclesiology, history, and race. These would be excellent reading for any college-level introductory course on sexual ethics or modern Catholicism that wanted short primers on, for example, the interpretation of scripture in the Catholic tradition, magisterial authority, and modern interpretations of natural law. The chronological chapters on specific documents would function well as a spine text for an upper- or graduate-level course on family or sexuality in theology.

The preface of the text emphasizes that the body of modern Catholic social teaching (CST) is seen as both fundamental to the Catholic magisterium and as a developing tradition. Teaching on the family, on the other hand, “has generally been presented as stable, unchangeable, and concerned only with rearticulating objective truths” (xi). While the content of the book is a summation and analysis of specific documents, the goal of the book is to name Catholic family teaching (CFT) as a “historically developing moral tradition . . . worthy of critical study in a parallel fashion to CST” (xi). By using the term CFT as a parallel to CST, the book names and creates CFT as a specific body of teaching akin to CST. In naming CFT, the authors hope to both point to the authority of this body, and at the same time, to critically engage it as a developing tradition, just like CST.

Annie Selak does a first-rate job in the introductory chapter on “Ecclesiological Contexts of Catholic Family Teaching,” outlining the idea of gradations of magisterial authority, as well as the functions of pastoral guidance, conscience, and the *sensus fidelium* in the reception of magisterial teaching. I hope educators will help readers apply these concepts to the documents identified as CFT in the book. For example, the chapters under the heading “Francis” include 1) the Synods on the Family, 2) *Amoris Laetitia*, 3) *Christus Vivit*, and 4) “Male and Female He Created Them: Toward a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education,” bringing together the proceedings of an extraordinary and ordinary synod, two Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations, and a document produced by a Vatican congregation. These documents have different levels of magisterial authority, and none is a papal encyclical or statement from an ecumenical council. Each document in the section on Pope Francis holds value both as an expression of magisterial authority and as a cultural touchstone. Each therefore is worthy of inclusion in this volume and of the consideration it is given. At the same time, care should be taken by both readers and instructors not to flatten the level of authority of each document into a homogenous “canon” of CFT. Likewise, care should be taken to understand that unlike the documents of CST, the vast majority of documents reviewed in this volume do not represent the highest levels of magisterial teaching, as we can see in the Francis section.

This is a well-done, timely, and extremely useful text about a topic that is only gaining cultural relevance. It is a strong addition to any theologian’s library. Educators should beware not to present “Male and Female He Created Them” and *Gaudium et Spes* as documents with equal weight in the tradition, even as they each get equal chapters in this book.

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