

Mitchell, Brian. *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1998, 390 pp., \$24.95 (hardcover).

In his encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri (Christian Education of Youth)*, Pope Pius XI expressed concern about the military training given to boys in some countries in the name of civic or physical education, and about how it was "sometimes even of girls, *contrary to the very instincts of human nature*" (see the encyclical, section on "Core Education"; italics added). This is indeed a very far cry from our own time when even orthodox Catholics do not seem to blink an eye at the reality of a military fully integrated with women. Such Western countries as the U.S. and Canada now have put men and women into battle virtually side by side and in various phases of combat. Yet, human nature has not changed since 1929. We need, amongst many other social issues, to give heed to the confused notion about the relations among the sexes embodied in our present military policy and not so blithely accept as ordinary our politicians' references to "our fighting men and women."

Brian Mitchell's book, *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster*, is an outstanding source about the current condition of the military on this subject. It is an updating of and more thorough treatment than his earlier *Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military*, which was also an excellent work. His new book traces the history of our current policy, the feminist pressures on the military from the larger political society, the reality about women's military performances compared with men, the evils and damage to the military that have resulted from integration, and the assorted inanities, outrages, and injustices which have become a pathetically standard feature of our current arrangements. The bottom line effect has been a substantial erosion of morale and readiness which leads Mitchell to the conclusion embodied in his subtitle: the U.S. military is flirting with disaster.

Mitchell's book is rich with well documented facts, a sharp contrast from the usual misrepresentation and deception about the purported success of women in the military seen in virtually all popular and scholarly publications. Among the many topics taken up by Mitchell are the following: the historical background of our present male-female integrated military; the impetus given to feminizing the military by the institution of the all-volunteer force; the sad, but covered up, experience with women at the service academies; sexual misconduct at the academies and in the broader services and the serious problems of unwanted pregnancies and mothers in the military; the influence of social scientists and social science research on integration; the ways in which the military has bent the rules to accommodate women, and the great disparities (i.e., double standards) which exist in the expectations of men and women; the psychological differences between men and women which are crucial in shaping the now diminishing military culture so essential to readiness; the

actual experience of women in combat or near combat situations; the experience of President Bush's Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces after the Gulf War; the now infamous Tailhook scandal; and such other well known episodes as the training death (from poor performance) of one of the Navy's first female combat aviators, the sexual harassment legal proceedings against Army Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, and the highly publicized case against Kelly Flinn (the Air Force's first female bomber pilot). Of particular note is how the feminist objective of integrating women into the military and moving them closer to combat assignments advanced very considerably during the supposedly conservative Reagan and Bush Administrations.

Mitchell presents eye-opening data and results of studies--usually ignored or not publicized--which provide solid proof of the substantial disparities between men and women in the military along with other troubling facts which indicate just how inappropriate a military, and especially a combat, role for the latter is. For example, he points to West Point and Army studies that showed women with considerably less physical strength than men; an Army study that showed the considerably greater susceptibility of women than men to injury; a Navy study revealing that women--both before and after training--were much less capable than men of performing assorted "damage-control" tasks aboard ship; and the sweeping WITA (Women in the Army) Policy Review Group study which demonstrated, with careful scientific evaluation, that over 90 percent of Army women were unable to meet the demands of over 75 percent of Army positions because of physical inability. Mitchell points to a Navy study which showed that the monthly sick call rate for women aboard ship was nearly twice that of men. It also showed that about 20 percent of female ship crew members became pregnant during the course of the year-long study (this in spite of the equally outrageous fact that virtually all forms of birth control were readily available as part of the "medical service" the Navy provides on ship). In recent years, the attrition rate for servicewomen has been 36 percent higher than that for servicemen. The most frequent reason for attrition has been pregnancy: encompassing 25 to 50 percent of the women who failed to complete their enlistment contracts. Comparative studies of physical abilities of male and female cadets at West Point revealed that if a double standard of performance expectations were not in place, 80% of the women would not qualify for an Army commission. Indeed, when one beholds all this evidence he sees the great wisdom of Pope Pius XI's statement above.

It is because of such evidence that Mitchell notes the presence of second thoughts about our present policies among numerous politicians and commentators. At the end of the book, Mitchell presents his conclusions about what the female role in the military should be. He says that, except for being military physicians and nurses (since the military cannot get enough of these

of either gender), there is *no reason* to have women in the military. Trying to continue to "'balance' the interests of military effectiveness and opportunities for women, is a compromise and a sure sacrifice of national security to an unworthy end" (p. 350). Actually, I wonder if even this seemingly very conservative position is not a bit generous. Female physicians and nurses working with the military should perhaps be civilians or be part of organizations such as the Red Cross and should be deployed well behind the battle lines during wartime. Otherwise, many of the very problems that Mitchell points to currently will be present, but on a smaller scale. Maybe public policy could be changed to allow that those in such roles could receive military-caliber pay and benefits.

Mitchell's book is top-notch policy analysis and a good example of empirical social science in the best sense. While philosophical reflection could have added more to the book, the author--who is not a philosophy professor but a former military man, solid researcher, and public-spirited citizen--nevertheless provides a commonsensical approach to his subject that, even if inadvertently, betrays a sound philosophical perspective. This is probably the best available book-length critique of the unisex American military.

-Stephen M. Krason

Franciscan University of Steubenville

Schall, James V. *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998. 243 pp. \$22.50 paperback.

Together with Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain was a central figure in the twentieth century revival of Thomism. With his brilliant studies in subjects ranging from metaphysics to art, he attempted to recover for a contemporary audience the philosophical and theological wealth of the Thomistic tradition. Active in the controversies of his day, Maritain took a singular interest in political philosophy, publishing a series of important works in the field. Now Fr. James Schall, perhaps our most gifted Catholic political theorist, provides this clear and comprehensive introduction to the political writings of the French philosopher.

For Schall, any serious study of Maritain must begin with his critique of Machiavelli. Since the core of Machiavellianism was its separation of politics from ethics, the "criterion of rule" for the prince did not consist in any objective standard of right, but rather in those policies that could help one achieve "success in remaining in power." Remarkably, Maritain did not fault Machiavelli for his realism, but for his blindness to the full "complexity" of human action. The devotion to a "non-moral politics" arose from a "simplification" of morality that neglected the "real drama of political life."