

# the CORD

July, 1969

Vol. XIX, No. 7

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14778

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Franciscan Fathers Press  
910 Willoughby Ave.,  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11221

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## COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

This month's cover was drawn by Brother Lawrence Tozzio, O.F.M., a student for the priesthood in the Immaculate Conception Province. The drawings on pp. 199, 202, and 209 are also the work of Brother Lawrence. Those on pp. 212 and 223 were drawn by Sister Mary Liam, F.M.S.C., of St. Joseph's Convent, Peekskill, N. Y.



THE CORD is a monthly review devoted to Franciscan spirituality and published with the approval of ecclesiastical superiors by the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University. Second class postage paid at St. Bonaventure, N.Y. 14778, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$3.00 a year; 30 cents a copy.



## Poverty and Personality

Recently we cleaned out our friary library and had piles of old Latin theology manuals and victorian treatises on spirituality to dispose of. One of the brothers hit on an ingenious way of doing the job: we boxed the books, took them outside, and gave the grammar-school kids an opportunity to take a book or two home. Our junk was for them treasure.

In a few years, of course, the children will be grown-ups, and they won't value junk. But they will value big cars, fine furniture, and first-rate stereos or cameras. "Love me, love my things" will become more deeply ingrained in them, and some of them will stop expressing themselves, as they become increasingly concerned with exhibiting what they have.

As experience of religious—and secular—life accumulates, the old saw that by the vow of poverty religious give up one of the props of personality, achieves aphoristic status, both because of its insight into what makes men tick, and because of its suggestion of a concrete ideal. The vow of poverty means that what I have, I have because of what I can do with it, not because of what it can do for me. Concretely, I can gauge my fidelity to this ideal by asking myself: What do I have of my own to show other people?

Do I wish there were no cloister, so people could see what things I have?

Security and comfort are often looked on as poverty's chief enemy today. Considerably more dangerous, it seems to me, is the surrender—sometimes under the guise of humanism—to a yen for possessions and the accompanying blurring of religious vision, which to be *religious* must not be worldly.

*J. Julian Davis*

## Martyrs and Rebels: Perpetua and Felicitas

Hilda Graef

Perpetua and Felicitas were two young North African women who died during the persecution under the Roman emperor Septimius Severus in 203 A. D. They did not at all conform to the popular idea of a Christian woman martyr: preferably a virgin, interested only in God, a hieratic and almost sexless figure. No. Perpetua was a well-born young lady of twenty-two with a small son, and Felicitas was her slave and eight months pregnant. Neither regretted their lost virginity, as one can so often read in hagiographical accounts of later saints. They were quite normal women. They were also rebels.

We Western Christians have been living for fifteen hundred years within a more or less Christian establishment. Christianity is still highly respectable, even if often attacked and perhaps ridiculed. Christianity is an old religion, it bears the glory and the dust of centuries. Can we Christians of the twentieth century even remotely picture what it must have been like to be a Christian at the beginning of the third?

Christianity was then a young religion. It was in constant revolt. The pagan establishment despised it — for what did it teach? Instead of sacrificing to the emperor, as every decent citizen of the Roman Empire would do, these people worshipped some odd criminal who had died on the gallows, and held highly suspect assemblies where they practised heaven knew what revolting rites. To be a Christian then was to be regarded as a long-haired teenager, flower child, student rebel, drug addict, all rolled into one. In fact, the early Christians were thoroughly unrespectable, revolutionary, and believed to be potential or even actual criminals. Yet slaves and young people flocked to this new religion which, let us be quite frank about it, not only gave meaning to their lives but also unheard-of excitement.

Is this description perhaps too fanciful? I do not think so, for in the quite authentic contemporary account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas there are some very significant scenes between Perpetua and her father, described in her own notes, which

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were incorporated in what is almost certainly the work of the great north African theologian Tertullian, scenes that seem quite surprisingly modern.

While Perpetua was still living at home as a catechumen, or "under instruction" as we would say today, her father came very often to argue with her, trying as hard as he could to make his daughter give up her faith, "because of his love for me," as she writes herself. On one of these occasions Perpetua told him again that she could not possibly call herself anything but a Christian. Then her father, infuriated by the very name which stood for everything he hated and despised, threw himself on her as if he would tear her eyes out. "But," she continues, "he only shook me, and was at once defeated, together with the arguments of the devil". After this scene he left her in high dudgeon, and she was greatly relieved to have a few days respite from him, making good use of the time to be baptized, together with her faithful slave, Felicitas. "And the Spirit made known to me," she writes, "that from my baptism nothing else was to be expected but bodily suffering."

This was not some kind of masochism; but during a severe persecution nothing else could, indeed, be expected; and Perpetua, accustomed as she was to the life of a wealthy young woman, certainly did not welcome suffering with open arms. For she writes, now from prison: "After a few

days we were cast into prison, and I was terrified because I had never experienced such darkness. O the terrible day! It got awfully hot because of the crowd and the pushing of the soldiers."

Perpetua was a spoilt young lady, waited on by slaves, and prisons in those days were not the reasonably hygienic places that they are now; nor were the African soldiers who arrested the Christians liable to accusations of "police brutality," but dealt with their victims as they saw fit. On the other hand, prisoners were not wholly cut off from their friends and relatives who were allowed to visit them frequently, and, best of all, the prison guards were quite willing to accept bribes in return for special favours of all kinds.

In the case of Perpetua the Christian deacons were allowed to look after her and the other Christian prisoners; they got in touch with her relatives who sent a sufficiently large bribe for the guards to let her out of prison for a few hours. For her greatest worry was her little two-year-old son who had not yet been weaned. We are never told anything about Perpetua's husband; but as she had been living with her own family in the house of her father before her imprisonment he was probably dead. It is rather strange that he should never be mentioned, for as will be seen later she worried about the eternal fate of a brother who had died as a child, but nothing is said in her notes about her own son's father. Hers

would probably have been an arranged marriage into which love did not enter at all; for though Perpetua boldly stood up to the old-fashioned paganism of her father, she was a very loving and tender young woman who would certainly have said something about her husband if she had had any affection for him.

As soon as the guards allowed her out of prison she went home and fed her child who, she writes, "was already weak from lack of food." Then she visited her mother and the one brother who was still a pagan to whose care she entrusted her little son. "And I was pining terribly," she writes, "because I saw them pining away on my account."

For several days after this visit Perpetua was almost demented with anxiety because of her child whom she imagined starving. Finally, by means of more bribes, she was allowed to have him with her and was transferred to a more comfortable part of the prison. "At once," she writes, "I became stronger, because I was no longer so worried about the child; and my prison suddenly seemed a palace to me, so that I liked to be there rather than anywhere else."

Perpetua was buoyed up by her faith, which she shared with so many other young people; moreover, she had mystical experiences that encouraged her. This was well known to her intimates, and one day her brother, the catechumen, who had been arrested together with her, asked her to

pray for a vision in order to find out whether they were to suffer or whether they would be freed. She promised to do this, and was duly shown in a dream a ladder reaching to heaven — an echo of Jacob's famous dream of a ladder at Bethel — on either side of which were instruments of torture such as hooks and daggers, while under it there was a huge dragon who laid snares for those wanting to ascend and who frightened them away. Now the first person to reach the top of the ladder was a priest, called Saturus, who had instructed Perpetua and her friends in the faith and who had voluntarily given himself up to the pagan authorities, because he had accidentally not been present when his converts were rounded up and put in prison. In her dream vision he turned to Perpetua and bade her come up after him, being careful not to let herself be bitten by the dragon.

So Perpetua boldly ascended, treading on the head of the dragon as if it were the first step of the ladder, and quickly reaching the top. Up there she saw a large garden, in which sat a white-haired man in shepherd's clothes who was milking sheep; he was surrounded by thousands of white-robed men and women. He called out to her: "Welcome, child," and gave her a small piece of cheese made from the sheep's milk, which she received into her joined hands and ate, and all those who stood around said "Amen." Then she woke up, still

tasting an indescribable sweetness. She at once told the vision to her brother, and they both realized that it meant that they were going to suffer martyrdom, so they prepared for it by abandoning any hope for their future here on earth.

Perpetua's dream vision is, of course, full of the religious symbolism of the time: Christ who, according to the gospel, had called himself the shepherd, was represented in early Christian art with a lamb on his shoulder; the white-robed men and women surrounding him occur in the Book of Revelation and other apocalyptic writings, and the milking and the cheese cakes are images of the eucharistic food distributed in the service of communion, which Perpetua had only recently received for the first time. It is not surprising, therefore, that her experience of the teaching and practice of Christianity, intensified by her own sufferings for Christ and the prospect of martyrdom, should have been reflected in this dream vision, which prepared her for the greater sufferings that were still to come.

Only a few days later there were rumours that the case of Perpetua and her fellow prisoners was about to be heard. As soon as they reached Perpetua's father, he went to the prison to make yet another effort to deter his daughter from giving her life for her religious convictions. He had realized by then that threats and fury made no impression on her, so he now used different tactics.

He tried to arouse her pity as well as her feelings of gratitude for all he had done for her. He asked her to have compassion with his grey hairs and reminded her that he had always preferred her, his only daughter, to her brothers: "Do not disgrace me before men," he pleaded — for being thrown to the beasts before the jeering crowds was indeed a disgrace, though it is difficult for us to realize the horror respectable pagans felt for the adherents of the despised sect of Christians, especially when they were condemned to the ignominious death of being made a public spectacle in the arena.

Perpetua remained unmoved; and so her father asked her to think of her brothers and pointed also to her mother and her aunt who had accompanied him and, as the most impressive argument of all, he told her to look at her son who would perish miserably with his mother: "Do not cut us off completely," he pleaded, "for none of us can ever hold up his head again if this terrible thing happens to you."

Far from upbraiding her, as he had done before, her father now kissed her hands and threw himself at his feet, with the tears streaming down his face, and, to show her how greatly he still respected her despite her pitiful condition, he no longer addressed her as "daughter" but called her "madam." Perpetua was greatly distressed to see her father in such a state of despair; for he alone of all her family had no

sympathy at all with her faith and therefore could not in the least understand why she should be so set on disgracing herself as well as him, depriving him of all the consolation he had expected from her in his old age. So, though he could not shake her determination, Perpetua tried her best to comfort him, but all she could say was that God's will must be done, that she no longer had any power over herself, but was completely in the hands of God. With this he had to be content, and he left her in great sorrow.

Contrary to her expectation, however, the trial did not take place on that day, but some time afterwards. Quite suddenly, while they were still at dinner, the prisoners were taken away and brought to the forum. The news spread like wildfire, and a large crowd, including many relatives of the prisoners, arrived in the market-place. One by one the Christians all confessed their faith. When it was Perpetua's turn her father made his way through the crowd, her little son, who had been returned from the prison he had shared with his mother, in his arms, crying out: "Have pity on your child!"

The trials of the Christians in those days were in some respect much more humane than the political trials, the concentration camps and executions in our own days: the officials conducting these trials were not interested at all in punishing the Christians, if they could possibly help it; and Hilarian, the procurator who pre-



sided in this case, energetically backed up Perpetua's father. For as soon as he had made his plea to his daughter, Hilarian seconded him saying: "Spare your father's grey hairs, spare your little boy. Do sacrifice for the safety of the emperor."

It was as simple as that. Nothing more was needed than to sacrifice, not even to, but only for the safety of, the emperor, a sacrifice that often involved no more than throwing a few grains of incense into the flame burning before the emperor's statue. There was no need publicly to insult Christ, to worship Jupiter, to make a formal retraction — nothing more was required than to fulfil

a civic duty incumbent on all citizens of the Roman Empire: to offer sacrifice for the safety of the head of state. It was a pagan state, a pagan head, and the sacrifice was expected to please the pagan gods — but was that, after all, so very different from paying taxes or swearing on oath of allegiance to a modern non-Christian government — was it more than a mere formality?

Evidently the procurator regarded it only as such, for if Perpetua had sacrificed for the safety of the emperor, Hilarian would have put no more awkward questions to her but would have let her go free and rejoin her family. But when he told her to sacrifice she answered: "I do not sacrifice." Only then did he ask the fateful question: "Are you a Christian?" And she answered: "I am."

After that her fate was sealed; but her father would still not be satisfied. Indeed he made such a scene, being almost out of his mind, and screaming and shouting to her to recant, that the procurator finally lost patience and ordered him to be severely beaten. "And I felt it as painfully as if I had been beaten myself," Perpetua wrote in her notes, "and I was sorry for his wretched old age."

It might seem a slight thing to have sacrificed for the emperor's safety compared with the misery of her father and the motherless childhood of her small son. But if she and all the other Christian martyrs of her time had taken the easy way out that was offered

them, there would be no Christianity today. Christianity can tolerate no compromise with what is diametrically opposed to it, though it can "baptize" many things which, though not originally Christian, do not contradict it — as it has baptized large sections of pagan philosophy and as it can baptize modern science and technology. But a civilization which, like the ancient Roman empire, is based on the worship of non-existent gods and persecutes those who openly worship the one true God and Jesus Christ his Son — such a civilization must be resisted even if this means giving up the most intimate and sacred family ties. This was the alternative that was as clear as daylight to Perpetua and her companions, for Christ himself had once said: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" — and Perpetua, being the strong and determined young woman she was, felt that she could do no other than act on these words.

After this terrible scene Hilarian pronounced sentence on the prisoners, condemning them all to be thrown to the wild animals, and, she writes, "we went down to the prison with joy." As her father had taken care of her son during and after the trial, she sent a deacon to him, asking for the child to be returned to her, so that she could feed him, but her father refused. Happily, she continues, the child no longer de-

sired her breast, nor did this cause her any physical pain. Though she attributed this to a special divine intervention it is not very surprising, seeing that the boy was then two years old, so that breast feeding would probably have stopped in any case by then. Perpetua was very happy about it, for, she continues, "in this way I was saved both from anxiety about the child and from physical discomfort."

The prisoners spent the time that was left to them before they had to fight the wild animals in prayer; and one day Perpetua suddenly remembered a name: Dinocrates. She had not been thinking of Dinocrates for a very long time, for he was her small brother who had died when he was seven years old. His death had been due to a terrible disease that had eaten away his face, so that people dared scarcely look at him because he was so very repulsive. As soon as she remembered him, Perpetua writes that she felt herself to be "worthy" to pray for him. Immediately she had a vision of Dinocrates "going out from a dark place... and he was parched with thirst, his face dirty and pale, and showing the wound he had when he died." To her great sorrow she could not reach him, for she was separated from him by an abyss. She also saw a basin with water from which Dinocrates was trying to drink, but he could not reach it, for the rim of the basin was too high for him. At this sight Perpetua was very sad, because her brother had to suffer

so much, and she prayed for him every day, until they were all transferred to a different prison, which was attached to the camp where they were going to fight with the beasts.

Then she had another vision, in which the dark room in which Dinocrates had been kept had become quite light, moreover his body had become clean and he was well dressed. There was now also a tumbler attached to the basin from which he was able to drink: "And when he had had enough he left the water to play happily like children do, and I woke up. Then I understood that he had been removed from the place of pain."

This vision is very interesting from several points of view. The question of what happens to children who die unbaptized had not been much discussed at that time. A little over two centuries later the pessimistic St. Augustine of Hippo was to consign them to everlasting perdition, because they had died in original sin. It would be impossible to imagine that this could have been the view of a young mother. Nevertheless, it was the teaching of the Church at that time that baptism alone could lead to eternal happiness. So Perpetua saw in her vision that through her prayers Dinocrates had achieved something like baptism in the other world (no impossibility at the time, since there was something like a "baptism for the dead"), for the basin he had been unable to reach before and from which he could

drink later evidently represents the baptismal font. And, a particularly charming trait which is at the same time characteristic of the motherly woman: when Dinocrates has drunk his fill he goes and plays — for his sister sees him as a child even in eternity, and a child's heaven is to play.



However, she and her companions had still to wait for the end. The prison regime was not too severe, for the assistant supervisor of the jail became more and more impressed with the courage and bearing of the Christians, and allowed them many visitors who strengthened their resolve and cheered them. But among them there was one who had a very depressing effect: Perpetua's unhappy father appeared yet again. He tore his beard, threw himself on the ground, and groan-

ed and wept, "saying things enough to move all creation," as Perpetua writes herself. But though he might have moved all creation, his own daughter remained unmoved, though she writes again that she was "terribly sorry for his miserable old age."

After this last highly emotional scene Perpetua was once more consoled with a vision. St. Paul had used the practices of the contestants in the games and competitions of the hellenistic world to illustrate the spiritual warfare of Christians. Now Perpetua saw herself treated like one of these. She heard the deacon Pomponius knocking at the prison gate, and when she opened it to him he rushed her to the amphitheatre in her dream and left her in the centre of the arena, surrounded by an excited crowd. But instead of the wild beasts which she had expected, she saw a man of frightening appearance who represented the devil, accompanied by his friends, and also another very handsome young man with his assistants who attended her, and then she changed her sex. This expression does not, of course, refer to a biological change; it means that she was no longer weak like a woman but had become strong like a man. Her assistants rubbed her with oil, as was the custom for contestants in the games, and then another supernatural being approached, a man of enormous size clad in a purple robe, who held a rod in one hand and a branch with golden apples in the other. He

said that if Perpetua were defeated she would be killed with the sword, but if she defeated her opponent she would receive the branch with the apples.

Then Perpetua describes the ensuing struggle with great gusto: "And we approached each other and started to exchange blows. He was trying to catch my feet, but I was beating on his face with my heels." But soon she became impatient because she did not make decisive progress, and so "I joined my hands and intertwined my fingers. Then I caught his head, and he fell on his face and I trampled on his head." Then the people began to shout, and her assistants sang psalms, while she went to the man in the purple robe and was given the branch with the apples. After that she woke up and realized that she was not meant to fight merely with beasts, but with the devil himself.

Thus far Perpetua's own notes, which end with the words: "I have brought this tale up the day before the show. If anyone likes, he may write what happened on the day itself."

Now the author of the whole *Passion* narrative, as has been said presumably Tertullian, takes over, and after reporting another vision, this time of the priest Saturnus, he tells what happened to the slave Felicitas in the meantime. Felicitas had been pregnant when she was arrested and was now eight months gone. When Perpetua and the other prisoners were scheduled to fight with the

wild animals in a few days' time she was very upset, because she wanted badly to suffer together with them. But it was the law that pregnant women were not allowed to be killed and to be made a public spectacle. So, three days before the appointed time, all the Christians prayed together with her that her baby might be born at once. Their prayer was granted, and her labour pains began immediately. They were very severe, as the child was premature, and she screamed so loud and cried so pitifully that one of the prison officers said to her: "If you carry on so now, what will you do when you are thrown to the wild animals of which you were so scornful when you would not sacrifice?" But she answered with great spirit: "Now I am suffering quite by myself; but then someone else will be by my side who will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for him."

So the officer was silenced, and Felicitas gave birth to a daughter who was adopted by one of the other Christian women.

Despite all her sufferings and the fearful scenes with her father Perpetua, too, had retained her high spirits which she displayed without inhibition to her jailers. These, strange to say, had themselves become more frightened of their prisoners than the prisoners were of them, because the Christians were frequently suspected of having preternatural powers. So, a few days before they were due to fight in the arena, the officer responsible for their safe-keeping

was afraid that they might use some magical rites to free themselves; hence they took some very severe safety precautions involving, among other things, a starvation diet.

In later hagiographical accounts the martyrs would no doubt have rejoiced at such treatment; not so Perpetua. This spirited young woman, on the contrary, taunted the officer responsible, telling him, "Why do you not at least allow us to have a good meal, seeing that the most noble Caesar takes exception to us and we have to fight on his birthday? Or is it not rather to your advantage that we should appear well fed on this occasion?"

So much impertinence rather impressed the officer; for there was no saying what this young lady might not do to discredit him with the people; and so he ordered the prisoners to be treated well and to be allowed to receive their friends and have a meal together with them.

This meal they turned into an agape, the "love-feast" which was celebrated in early Christian times. It was not the eucharistic meal, that had gone before in private, but a meal celebrating the mutual love and devotion of Christians for each other. The prison was accessible to the people on this day, and the Christians made good use of this to propagate their faith. They were in high spirits; for they told the pagan populace that they would be judged by the Lord, and they laughed at the inquisitiveness of

the people who had come to see what these Christians looked like. The gaiety of these young people facing a certain violent death was incomprehensible to the pagan crowds, and it is not surprising that their extraordinary behaviour should have led many to inquire what it was that caused all this exuberance. Indeed, it is a historical fact that many pagans were attracted to Christianity by the fearless gaiety of the martyrs.

Before the Christians were led into the arena their jailers tried to force them to put on special costumes which would have added insult to injury, for the women were to be made to dress like devotees of the goddess Ceres and the men like priests of Saturnus. The others might have complied with this demand, but not Perpetua. She told the officer who had given this order that they had come so far willingly, for the sake of their freedom of conscience; they had offered their life and freedom precisely for this, that they should be able to live as Christians; they were not now prepared to pretend that they were devotees of some pagan gods.

Even the pagan officer in charge of them could not but see the logic of this reasoning and allowed them all to go into the arena in their own clothes. There a very savage cow, who had been made particularly wild, was to be let loose on them, for, with a fine feeling for what was fitting, the authorities had ordered that female prisoners should fight with female animals.

Once in the arena, the martyrs were stripped and put into nets. But when the crowd saw that one of the women was quite young and dainty and the other immediately after childbirth, with breasts dripping with milk, they could not endure the sight and cried out that they should be covered. So the attendants hurriedly threw some loose clothes over them.

Finally all was ready, and Perpetua was the first to be attacked by the cow, who threw her so that she fell on her side and her tunic was torn. With a very feminine gesture she not only covered her wound with her tunic, but also bound up her hair which had fallen on her shoulders, all dishevelled. "For it did not become a martyr," the author comments, "to suffer with dishevelled hair, for this would have been a sign of mourning." This may have been so, but perhaps Perpetua's actions may also have been the unconscious reflex movements of a young woman who wanted to appear looking tidy and dignified even, or especially, in her finest hour. This seems even more likely because, as will be seen presently, she was not conscious at that moment of what she was doing.

Having tidied herself she got up, and at that moment the cow attacked and threw Felicitas, and so Perpetua gave her friend a hand and helped her to her feet. When both young women were thus standing hand in hand in the arena, the blood dripping from their wounds, even the populace

had had enough sensation for one morning, and both girls were called back.

Perpetua was met by a catechumen called Rusticus, and when he talked to her she seemed to awake as if from a deep sleep and, looking around, said to him: "I cannot tell when we are going to be led to the cow." Everyone within earshot was amazed; and when she was told that she had already been in the arena she refused at first to believe it, and only realized what had happened when she looked down and saw the blood from her wound and the tears in her dress.

The author of the martyrdom explains this strange phenomenon with the words: "So deeply had she been in the Spirit and in ecstasy." This is not quite so extraordinary as it may appear to us. We should remember that St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, deliberately concentrated so intensely on a theological problem that he felt nothing when he had to undergo a very painful operation. At a time when anaesthetics were unknown quite a few people seem to have had the power to place themselves — whether consciously or unconsciously in a trancelike state in which they did not feel what was happening to them. Perpetua, as we know, had the gift to solve questions by dream visions; so it is not too surprising that she should have entered into a trance state as soon as she was confronted with the wild cow, and her various actions, such as binding up her hair and support-

ing Felicitas, would have been unconscious. There are other instances of well attested martyrdoms, especially of women, in which the martyr was in a trance state while confronting the wild animals in the arena.

Even at this hour Perpetua was thinking of her family; for she sent for the brother who was a catechumen and exhorted him and the other catechumen, Rusticus, to remain steadfast in the faith and not to waver because of her sufferings.

It was the custom to kill the martyrs who had not died in the arena with the sword, and Perpetua was assigned to a young gladiator, whose hand was trembling. This is often said of the executions of martyrs, but in this case it is certainly more than probable; for it cannot have been easy for a young man to cut off the head of an attractive young

woman. So the author tells us that Perpetua herself placed his trembling hand at her throat, and so she died "for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

She and Felicitas died young for a religion which itself was still young and therefore attractive to the young, a religion which was, as we should say today, anti-establishment and revolutionary. But Christianity, like all else on this earth, must develop. It must develop to a deeper understanding of itself, certainly, though at times also into a state of decadence, and it looks like a sign of its divine origin that just in such times there should always be great personalities who try to restore it to its pristine glory, and in this work of restoration women, too, have always their share, as they had their share in suffering for the faith in the age of the martyrs.



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## MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### Holy Orders:

Sacrament of the Father · Conferring Unity of Life

Valens Waldschmidt, O. F. M.

As Franciscans, we are familiar with Saint Francis' great respect for the priesthood. With a note of wonderment, and even of mild bewilderment, we read the words of the saint about the exalted dignity of the priest. The story has been told in the following way by the poverello: "If I were at the same time to meet some saint coming down from Heaven and any poor little priest, I would first pay my respects to the priest and proceed to kiss his hands first. I would say, 'Ah, just a moment, St. Lawrence, because this person's hands handle the Word of Life and possess something that is more than human.'"

If the words of a saint seem at times to our sophisticated minds over-exuberant, it is, however, only through the open door of a saint's mind that an occasional ray of illuminating grace rolls back the darkness of our small thoughts and shows us the depth and height of great truths. Can we not find behind the words and actions of Saint Francis, a whole new and profound view of the priesthood? Is not the priesthood itself a reflection and manifestation of the mysterious circle of

life, light, and love which exists at the very center of the Most Holy Trinity Itself? Is not the priest, who is an "alter Christus", also an "alter Trinitas?" Do not the words of Saint Francis in praise of the priesthood also send us in search of some understanding of how Holy Orders is the sacrament of God the Father, the sacrament of God the Son, and the sacrament of God the Holy Spirit?

In our meditation on the priesthood, we hope to see a manifes-

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tation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, since the priest is endowed with the power reserved to the Trinity Itself: to initiate Life, to dispense Light, and to inflame Love; or, as has so often been said, to teach, rule, and sanctify. Saint Francis, we ask you to help us gain a deep respect for the priesthood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and further our understanding of its mystery.

### The Scriptural Setting

In John 15, our Lord reveals to us an unsuspected depth in the priesthood when he speaks to the apostles about a special friendship between himself and them. His words imply more than personal praise for them, more than mere awareness of their personal qualities. Jesus is saying that the priesthood makes the man; and not the man, the priesthood. Instinctively every priest, if he is alert to even a modicum of reality, prays, "Lord, who am I that I should share in the power of the Most Holy Trinity?"

With humility and reverence, we look in upon the scene at the Last Supper when Christ spoke and prayed with his disciples. Saint John has touchingly depicted this scene with colorful words that reveal the atmosphere of love encircling Christ's farewell words. We, in turn, can only listen and hope to learn a little more of the mysteries of the Father's Kingdom of priestly Love and of the priestly immolation in the Heart of Jesus. For our medi-

tation, John writes: "You are my friends if you do the things I command you. No longer do I call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from my Father I have in turn made known to you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give you. These things I command you, that you may love one another" (Jn. 15:14-18).

### The Doctrinal Basis

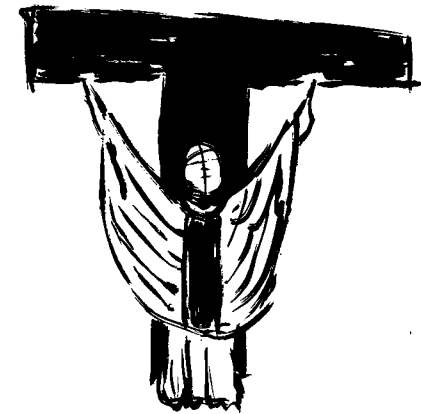
With deep reverence Saint Francis spoke of God's Fatherhood. Let us read his words slowly, so as to capture a little of his love for our Father who lives in unity with the Son and the Spirit: "Our Father most holy: our Creator, our Redeemer and Savior, our Comforter. Who are in heaven: in the angels and the saints, giving them light to know you, since you, O Lord, are Light; setting them afire to love you, since you, O Lord, are Love; abiding in them and filling them for their bliss, since you, O Lord, are the sovereign good, the eternal good, from which everything good has its being and without which there is nothing good" (Words, §36).

This introductory paraphrase of the Our Father, in the light of the Franciscan tradition, can well

serve as a background for the understanding of the sacrament of Orders. Francis' thoughts can well suggest to us the relationship of God's Fatherhood to the priesthood of Christ. Too seldom, perhaps, do we connect the priesthood of the New Law with God the Father; and yet there is every reason for this thought. The priesthood of Christ is directed to the Father. All praise, all thanksgiving, all satisfaction, and all petition is made to the Father through Christ our high Priest. But foremost, the priesthood of Christ deals with life, a sharing of divine life with creatures, a creation of supernatural life at Baptism and an increase of this life in the other sacraments. But there is only one source of life, one complete Fatherhood, and this is the Fatherhood of God in heaven. The Father is the very source of all unity in life.

If Christ's priesthood is always in relation to his Father, how can we escape thinking of our priesthood in relation to God our Father? The words of our Lord: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" apply also to all poor human priests, and only in this light does the priesthood find its true orientation. The powers of the priesthood dead with life—God's kind of life.

The priest's power to make men holy, to unite their lives to God's, to penetrate to the deepest recesses of their hearts and to transform them — both by the initial gift and by the progressive



later unfolding of their life as adopted sons of God — all this is rooted in the sacrament of Holy Orders, which, as it transforms our mode of being, must likewise transform our manner of acting.

### Present-Day Needs

The idea of spiritual fatherhood is somewhat strange to the modern mentality. Its strangeness lies in some of our newly developed ways of thinking. To a certain extent, spiritual fatherhood has lost some of its meaning — we find it a difficult concept to grasp in a society which gleefully engages in the pastime of psychologically probing the hidden recesses of the mind as though it has discovered a new ouija board. Although we love to play a kind of "tick-tack-toe" game with mental and emotional actions and reactions, we are not quite ready to expose our souls to the serious business of removing imperfections, faults, and sins so as to plant in their place a true con-

version through the virtues of penance and charity. The result is that man, perhaps, likes to do a lot of playful psychological fusing without doing much ascetical dusting. He feels that he needs a kind of psychological umpire to watch him at his introspective play, rather than a spiritual father to exhort, advise, and guide him in the reality of Christian perfection. Actually, it is only when man builds his life on the Fatherhood of God, that he can approach the idea of the spiritual fatherhood of the priest with a greater degree of sincerity, reflective of the seriousness of his life and his love of God.

If the Franciscan has absorbed some of the seriousness of Francis about the Fatherhood of God, he will be in a more favorable position to discover a great closeness of the priesthood to the same all-embracing Fatherhood. He will respectfully view the priest as a spiritual father and see much more easily how a spiritual father should act toward spiritual children who are at the same time the adoptive sons of God. He will attempt to be available as a spiritual director, recognizing men's need to be established in the mysteries of God from which flows a special love that expresses itself in the avoidance of sin and the practice of virtue. "All the theologians and persons who administer the most holy words of God," Francis insists, "we must honor and respect as people who minister spirit and life to us" (Words, §91a).

The spiritual fatherhood of the Franciscan priest flows, therefore, from the Fatherhood of God. In turn, the Franciscan director of souls will endeavor to bring people back to their loving Father in heaven. From all eternity this most providential of Fathers has planned to send his beloved Son into the world to establish a priesthood that would return all things to their true home in the very Godhead itself. Here is the basic plan of Franciscan spiritual direction and its correct atmosphere and "technique."

### Benefits for Religious Life

In the Father who is in heaven, all things find life. Through Baptism, a new life comes to men through the Son made man, the eternal Priest. But Christ shares this priesthood with men as dispensers of his mysteries and the mysteries of the Father. It is the priest who ordinarily pours the water in Baptism, raises his hand in absolution, changes bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. It is the priest who leads men to the Father. It is the priest who is the apostle, the channel of life, the instrument of holiness. It is the Franciscan priest, whose priesthood belongs to the Church, and whose apostolate is that of the Church, who has been ordained to bring the sanctity of the Father into contact with the world. Thus, repeating often the words of Jesus, the priest ought frequently to renew his priestly commitment: "I go to the Father."

"I must be about my Father's business." "Not my will, but yours be done."

### Resolutions

(1) Again, recall to mind that the Fatherhood of God is the unifying doctrine of Franciscan spirituality. As Francis wrote in his paraphrase of the Our Father: "Hallowed be your name; may we grow in our knowledge of you, that we may appreciate the width of your favors and the length of your promises to us as well as the utter height of your majesty and the depth of your judgments" (cf. Eph. 3:18). (2) Behind the priesthood in the Franciscan Order, we should strive to remember that it is the Father who is the source of unity in life: the life that is initiated in Baptism and perfected in Confirmation, reaches a still greater intimacy in the sacrament of Orders. (3) May the cry of

Paul, "Abba, Father," enrich our thoughts on the priesthood, so that it takes on a new purpose in the apostolate through which we serve the Church. (4) Again, be inspired with a respect like that which Francis showed to priests, that our mutual respect and love may be effective for the building up of the Mystical Body.

### Prayer

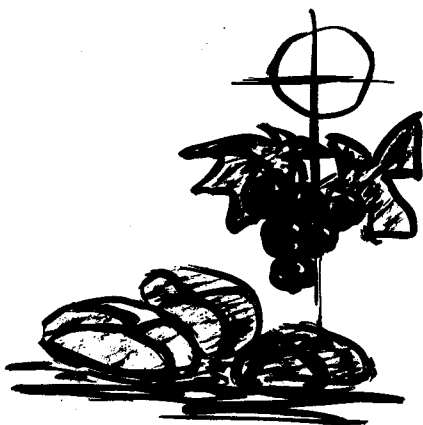
Saint Francis, help us to look up to the dignity of the priestly office and respect the power established in its sacramental character. In the honor and respect that we wish to show to all priests, may we be reminded of the loving Fatherhood of God. May all priestly blessings be a bestowal of God the Father's providential goodness. Make all priests conscious of their apostolate as the business of the Father of us all in heaven. Amen.

### PEACE PRAYER FOR ALL MEN

Eternal Father, you who are the God of all men and the author of all things: past, present, and future; grant peace and harmony to all men everywhere. Let us have peace in the battle fields, on the streets, and in the schools. Let the spirit of peace reign in the homes, in the prisons, and in the places where the sick dwell.

O Lord, help all peoples to treat one another as brothers so that we may have the absence of war, of fear, of want and of hunger. This we humbly ask of you through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

*Brother Anthony Savasta, O.S.F.*



## How St. Clare Was Invited to Share a Meal with the Friars

*A Paraphrase from the "Little Flowers"*

*by Patrick Jordan, O.F.M.*

When Saint Francis was in Assisi he often made it a point to visit Saint Clare. They would talk for long hours concerning spiritual matters, and these visits always enriched and strengthened their close friendship. On one occasion, while discussing mutual concerns, Clare remarked in passing that some time she would like to share a meal in the company of Francis and the friars. Francis let the remark ride, but later a few of the brethren brought it to his attention again, noting the kindness and concern of Clare and her sisters for all the friars. This graciousness was indeed one of the early friars'

most precious gifts. With many more such arguments the brothers eventually prevailed on Francis, and he set a date for the dinner. Instead of having the meal at San Damiano, Clare's convent, Francis decided it would be a good change for Clare to come over to the Portiuncula.

So when the day came for the little celebration, a group of brothers went over to the cloister at San Damiano, and escorted Clare and her companions to St. Mary of the Angels. When they had arrived, Clare immediately went to the place of her investiture, knelt, and prayed anew for strength and perseverance.

*Brother Patrick Jordan, O.F.M., is a student for the priesthood in the Santa Barbara Province, at the Berkeley campus of the University of California.*

This was a place of fond memories for her.

Meanwhile, Francis had stayed at home, for he had been preparing the simple fare. As was his custom, the meal would take place on the bare ground. While he made everything ready, the other friars showed Clare and her companions around their little house. What simple pride was theirs.

Finally, it was time to eat. Of course, there was really very little available to make it anything near a feast, yet they were quite happy with what they had, especially the simplicity of the table and the warm sharing of one another's company. It was not long before the supper conversation developed into a discussion of spiritual things. Francis began — quietly as the grass that surrounded them — and gradually elevated the whole group into a banquet of richest awareness. He spoke with profound direct-

ness of the marvelous depth of God, of the sufferings of Christ, of the incomparable riches of life in the Spirit. The entire little gathering forgot about eating, and was transformed into a sort of communal ecstasy. Some say the peasants saw flames about the little house that day, but what is more important and certain is that the group was unforgettably touched by the divine love that had sprung up in their hearts.

After a time, this imposing experience subsided, and the little company finished up what bits of food remained before them. It had been an unrecountable experience for them all. When the time came for Clare and her companion to return home, the parting was one of great peace and gratitude. The friars treasured this meeting in their hearts, and long afterwards the warmth of it brought new light to them and to all of Clare's sisters at San Damiano.

## THERE SHALL BE ONE CHRIST

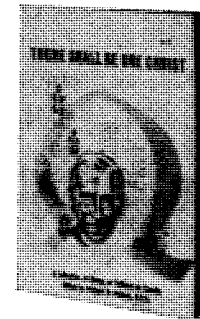
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## There

*With the violets  
and the honey bee,*

*The great oaks  
and the sycamore tree,*

*Where the sun's rays  
accent the greens,  
in a thick and  
quiet woods...*

*I find God!*

Sister M. Jeremias Stinson, O.S.F.

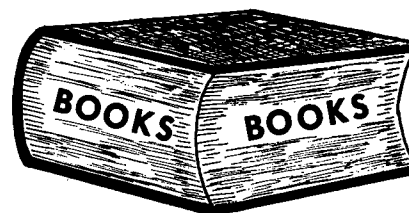
## Magdalen

*Bedded clay  
drenched, soaked, sodden, wormed  
Oozing medium  
of potters—adulterated  
(How you fired this fenny soil!)*

*Potters—  
Simon, Judas, squirm, writhe  
as drying clay Ephrates and yields—  
Alabastered!  
Spun, fingered, kilned to china'd  
translucence*

*Vesseled  
to cup and channel Redemptive Blood  
With Mary, John*

Sister Anthony Maureen Connery, O.S.F.



*Science and Christ.* By Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S. J. Trans. René Hague; New York: Harper and Row, 1969. Pp. 230. Cloth, \$5.00.

*Reviewed by Friar Timothy Jamison, O.F.M., a student theologian at St. Leonard College, Dayton, Ohio, and a contributor to the symposium on Teilhard, There Shall Be One Christ (Franciscan Institute, 1968).*

This book reveals again the Teilhardian vision of man being drawn by and progressing toward Christ the center of the universe. It has a new slant, however, for it consists of essays concerned with religious problems (modern unbelief, salvation of mankind, death, Eucharist), written by Teilhard during the years 1919-1935. These essays are more Teilhard's reflections on his personal faith and, not being revised, can only be the testimony of one man's faith; but Teilhard's faith can be working material for our own.

I would like to sum up some general ideas from these essays, which, though written over the course of many years, were never intended to be systematic. In talking of man as a conscious being, Teilhard says that "it is better to be conscious than not to be conscious," and "it is better to be more conscious than less conscious." To this primacy of consciousness, Teilhard adds his conviction of the unshakeable certainty that the universe, considered as a whole, has a goal and that it cannot take the wrong road nor come to a halt in its journey; but it will attain a higher degree of consciousness. Teilhard interprets this fruit of a higher

degree of consciousness as a looking for an absolute perfection. This faith in an absolute is the reason why secular humanism could never give total meaning to his own life. "I would be psychologically incapable of making the least effort if I were unable to believe in the absolute value of something in that effort" (p. 42).

Employing a sort of theological anthropology, Teilhard sees the disunity of multiple particles (atoms, animals, men) being unified by a higher organic synthesis. For him, this higher synthesis, this One, can only be the Christ of the scriptures, the One "who holds all things in unity" (Col. 1:17) and "who is everything and is in everything" (Col. 3:11). Christ is not only the center of spiritual consistence, but he also has a supreme physical influence on every cosmic reality. "Christ would not be the God of St. Paul, nor the God of my heart, if, looking at the lowliest, most material, created being, I were unable to say, 'I cannot understand this thing, I cannot grasp it, I cannot be fully in contact with it, except as a function of him who gives to the natural whole of which it is a part its full reality and its final determined form'" (p. 57). It is the presence of the Incarnate Word that has unified and raised up the multiples of the earth.

What always strikes me in Teilhard's books is his eschatological hope, his mind-expanding vision of the eventual triumph of evolution in the Christ. In this vision, there is no distinction between "natural" and "supernatural," but we have a process of autonomous particles being unified by Christ.

This basic Teilhardian theme has already been treated in his other books, but in *Science and Christ* Teilhard gives us a new insight into his vision by a rephrasing and nuancing of his theme. This book, it should be stressed, contains his reflections on his own personal faith.

His vision is so all pervasive and compelling that at times the reader is swept along more by his mystical impressionism than by a critical analysis of how he gets there. The book requires the reader to supply certain "lacunae" in Teilhard's thought — keep in mind that it wasn't revised for publication — e. g., how does Teilhard know that the world as a whole will arrive at its end, i. e., a higher degree of consciousness? He has to extrapolate; and here we have Teilhard's strength and weakness. In so far as an extrapolation cannot be based on firm scientific evidence, it will not appeal to some people. But in so far as Teilhard's extrapolations are both the unity of his own scientific evidence and his religious faith, they have stronger support.

In general, then, this book does review familiar Teilhardian themes; but it is still challenging in its explanation and additional insights into them. Also, this book reveals Teilhard as a mystical theologian: *fidens quaerens fidei suae intellectum*.

**The Underground Mass Book.** Edited by Stephen W. McNierney. Baltimore: Helicon, 1969. Pp. 127. Paper, \$1.35.

*Reviewed by Father Michael D. Melach, O.F.M., editor of this review.*

It is a pleasure to welcome this excellent and long overdue book. While it is not quite accurate to say that it is the "first" book from the underground (p. 1), it certainly is the first liturgical manual (*sit venia verbi*) from that source.

The editor first outlines the general form of worship employed by the Group in Baltimore. It consists of "The Word," "The Eucharist," and "The Meal." Thirty two readings are furnished for use at the group's discretion, from diverse religious, political, philosophical, and literary sources. Ten canons, two never before published and many with very

interesting, distinctive emphases, are given here — as are twenty-seven songs now largely familiar to many "above ground."

The editor, chairman of the philosophy department at Loyola College and a member of the Baltimore Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, has written what can be described only as a low-key, well balanced introduction. It is to be hoped that his patient explanation will dispel much of the unfounded mistrust on the part of so many Church officials.

**The Underground Mass Book** is, hopefully, only the first of many such publications by which Christians will communicate for their mutual profit the lessons they have learned in their endeavor to celebrate ever more faithfully and fruitfully the Mystery of their faith.

**Spectrum of Catholic Attitudes.** Edited by Robert Campbell, O.P. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1969. Pp. xxx-191. Cloth, \$4.95.

*Reviewed by Father Julian Davies, O.F.M., Book Review Editor of THE CORD.*

This second of Father Campbell's **Spectrum** works (the first being his **Spectrum of Protestant Beliefs** (Bruce, 1968), reviewed in **THE CORD** 4/68 and discussed *ibid.*, 7/68) examines the views of seven prominent laymen on matters of Catholic doctrine and concern, and the divergences among them does — unfortunately — truly represent a spectrum. I say "unfortunately" since with the editor and Marshall McLuhan, whose paragraphs on private opinions of Church doctrine are placed at the beginning of the replies, I regret that there is a divergence of belief on such fundamental matters as the infallibility of the Pope and the Virgin Birth among those who publicly profess to be and are recognized as Catholics.

Twenty-nine questions on subjects

ranging from dogma — e. g., the Trinity, Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Eucharist — to morals — divorce, contraception, pre-marital sex — to socio-moral problems — racial integration, communism, Vietnam — were put to Messrs. William Buckley, Daniel Callahan, Leslie Dewart, Dale Francis, Marshall McLuhan, Frank Sheed, and Walter Matt. The replies to the questions could almost be guessed from knowledge of the men: the only real surprise was Mr. Buckley's cautious endorsement of contraception, an endorsement he might make even more cautious had he been asked after *Humanae vitae*. Leslie Dewart applies his view of the cultural conditioning of dogmatic formulas to about every topic from God and Trinity to Satan, in such a way that he conveys the impression that he has "outgrown" not just the formulations but the very doctrines themselves (v. g., his views on the Virgin Birth and heaven and hell).

Daniel Callahan's observations on a bodily God, the Trinity, and Mary (among others) indicate to me that he has thought himself out of the Catholic faith. His views seem the outcome of empiricist presuppositions (particularly that bodily and real are equivalent terms) rather than serious confrontation with the data of Revelation and the witness of the Church. Dale Francis and Frank Sheed emerge as the most orthodox of the contributors, and Walter Matt gains stature as nearer the center than his long association with the *Wanderer* might lead one to suspect.

Following the responses of the seven laymen, the editor includes two charts illustrating the extent to which the contributors represent the Catholic public in general and "the trend away from orthodoxy." Unfortunately both surveys involved only Catholic college freshmen. The over 30's — and even, I believe, the over 25's — are far more orthodox than the surveys suggest.

**Spectrum of Catholic Attitudes** is interesting reading and at times delightful, as when Mr. Buckley writes, "What disturbs me most about opposition to Mary is that it is so unchivalrous" (p. 62). The editor's introduction (which, with his Preface and presentation of the contributors amounts to a review of the responses from a point of view not far from my own) nevertheless highlights the real tragedy of the divisions of belief which made such a book possible. We pray that the venting of the disparate attitudes towards the truth of Catholic faith may contribute to unity in the Church rather than further polarization.

**The Catholic Revolution.** By Douglas J. Roche. Foreword by Donald J. Thorman. New York: David McKay, 1968. Pp. xxiii-325. Cloth. \$6.50.

*Reviewed by Father Vincent Grogan, O.F.M., Secretary to the Minister Provincial at St. Francis Friary (Holy Name Province), New York City.*

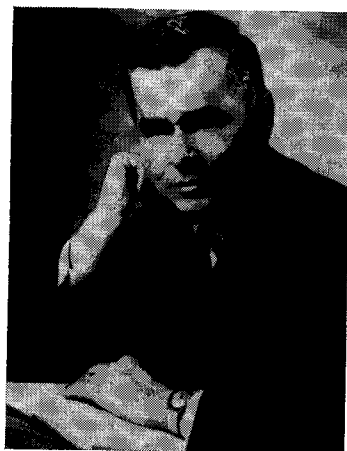
That a revolution can be waged successfully without weapons and bloodshed is the theme of this easy-to-read book by Douglas Roche, a Canadian journalist with excellent credentials. No mere arm-chair reporter, Mr. Roche travelled thousands of miles in the U. S., Canada, and to Rome, to gain first-hand knowledge of this revolution now engulfing the Church. We can then in no way question or dispute the facts which he has presented in this handy volume. The reader may of course legitimately disagree with his interpretation of the data, but the book is a stimulus to reflection on the crisis we are witnessing in the institutional Church. An invaluable six-page bibliography of material related to the current renewal alone renders this book worth the six-fifty selling price.

At first, I wished that the author had used the term "evolution" (with

its gradual and peaceful overtones) rather than "revolution" (with its violent and swift connotation) to describe the ferment within the Church. But upon reading this book, I judged that Roche was very precise in designating the crisis as a revolution. As he states in the Introduction, such a term aptly indicates "the radical change in thought and action within the Church." The Church can no longer wait for the world to come to it — a world which by and large considers the Church an unnecessary relic of the past. The Church, in other words, can no longer retain the defensive posture of the Reformation era.

In the course of twelve enjoyable chapters, the author delineates the revolution in all its phases — Church government, the laity, priests, nuns, youth, etc. The description of the 1967 Synod of Bishops (the Pope realized this synod had to work or it would be the end for collegiality) and the Third World Congress of the Laity (issued a statement for the first time on a moral topic — birth control) provided a far-reaching interpretation of those historic assemblies.

Particularly trenchant was the section on priests. There is, according to Roche, a genuine identity crisis for priests today. Celibacy is not the core issue at all, he reasons — and validly so, I might add. In his discussion of Catholic education, the author evidences a knack for painful bluntness: the school system was founded primarily to assimilate Catholic immigrants into what was then an alien, Protestant-dominated culture, and to form them as middle-class Americans. Since the times have changed so drastically, is there any further justification for our elaborate and expensive education program, especially since it is failing to reach the modern counterpart of our immigrant ancestors — the Negro, the Mexican, the Puerto Rican? Incidentally, Roche subtitles



Douglas J. Roche, Author of **THE CATHOLIC REVOLUTION**, David McKay Publishing Company, Inc.

this chapter "A Broken Assembly Line." The role of youth today is the subject of another fine treatment: youth have "turned off" the established Church (which they have identified with the selfish rich) and its hypocrisy and over-involvement in legalism. A critique, I think, that should be carefully weighed by Church leaders, since the young people constitute the Church of tomorrow.

Although the book is written from a liberal viewpoint, Roche does give fair and sympathetic treatment to Pope Paul. The Pontiff is a consolidator (not an out-and-out opponent of reform) — what the Church needs at this juncture in its history. Pope John was an innovator, and to Pope Paul fell the unenviable task of implementing and guiding the path of renewal chartered by Pope John.

On the other hand, Roche gives a less understanding treatment of other Church leaders — bishops and religious superiors. All too often (with a few notable exceptions, like Bishop Sheen) the bishops have

failed to grasp the thrust of the renewal which they themselves initiated at the Second Vatican Council. Their actions betray their belief that the world is still the same as 500 or 800 years ago — that Catholics are content to remain eternally passive in a culture that stresses action and initiative at every turn. In short, the Church leaders are out of contact with reality. This fact, coupled with the seemingly intransigent opposition of Curia officialdom, has weakened the renewal and forced the crisis into sharper focus.

The author does betray some lack of understanding concerning the magisterium of the Church. Thus one could quibble with his statement (p. 45) that the Church's official teaching has altered radically on the size of families and parents' obligation to limit the number of children they bear. Particularly in his chapter entitled "A Pilgrim's Theology" and in the Afterword on *Humanae Vitae*, Roche confuses, or better, equates theologians with the official teaching office of the Church.

The thrust of this book is outward — the Church vis-à-vis the secular society — the mission of the Church to men of the 20th and 21st centuries: how it can re-establish effective communications with this world. Such an approach contrasts clearly with another book on Church renewal: *Relax and Rejoice*, by Father Raymond, which emphasized the interior conflicts and pangs of renewal in the Church with little or no reference to the present world milieu. Both books should be read to obtain a balanced view of the post-conciliar Church.

Upon completing Mr. Roche's book, which the Foreword describes as "the twentieth century Acts of the Holy Spirit," the reader may indeed wish that this Catholic Revolution be as successful as the American Revolution. As is the case with any revolution, however, one can never be absolutely certain of its enduring effects.

**The Religious Community and the Secular State.** By Kenneth Westhues. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1968. Pp. 127. Cloth \$3.95.

*Reviewed by Friar Kenneth Lovasik O.F.M., a student for the priesthood in the Immaculate Conception Seminary and a graduate student in philosophy at Duquesne University.*

Many attempts have been made to explain and deal with the unrest that seems at times to characterize religious life in this twentieth century. Many approaches moreover, have been taken in an effort to tackle the problem head on. Kenneth Westhues, a teaching fellow at Vanderbilt University, has made one such attempt. Seeking to understand exactly what is happening today, he uses a sociological approach, interpreting the present in view of the past and with a view to the future. As the title of his work suggests, Mr. Westhues relies upon the relationship between the religious community and the culture in which it exists to provide him with a thread which runs through and unifies his study.

He traces the religious life — a life-style — back to the primitive Church, in which men "left the world" to concentrate more fully on their God apart from the distractions of worldly living. He traces this development through the Age of Monasticism, the era of the Mendicants, and the rise of the modern congregations founded in the 18th and 19th centuries. It would seem, on the basis of his study that there has been a fairly constant movement on the part of the religious community through the centuries from outright alienation from culture to a more harmonious relationship with it.

He notes that there was a time when religious communities were a reaction against the hierarchy of the Church itself (pp. 46ff), and that gradually they were integrated into

the structure of the Church to perform certain functions. (The religious were very popular with the people; so it was to her benefit that the Church incorporate them into her structure).

The second half of the book is devoted to the religious life-style as it expresses itself in the 20th century, a look into its prevalent structures, and, finally, an examination of its possibilities for the future. Mr. Westhues' thesis, as I see it, seems to be that we have reached a point in the evolution of religious life where it is possible for the community to absorb what is best from the culture in which it exists; that, perhaps, it has no choice but to do so, since those who are entering the community today are a part of that culture, and that culture is very much a part of them.

He refers to the new forms of religious living evolving today (e. g., the Brothers of St. Joseph) as "secular monasticism," since much of the traditional structure that has characterized our life-style is conspicuously absent in them, and, moreover, there appears to be more of a stress on the individual than on the community in these new institutes.

The question which arises from this study is this: Is what we are experiencing today the sign of an even broader change that will bring the religious community into harmony with contemporary secularized society, or will the ideal of a society of love on earth (the original idea of a religious community) flicker and fade away behind crumbling monastery walls? Perhaps the author's reference to the Brothers of St. Joseph as an example of what the future of religion could be, contains a subtle value-judgment: that this is the turn that religious life ought to take.

The four-page list of selected references attests the research that has gone into this project. Yet I would like to have seen the sub-

ject treated at even greater length because I feel that justice can hardly be done in so few pages. Although I am not in full agreement with all of Mr. Westhues' conclusions, his book being by no means exhaustive, I feel that he has made a valuable contribution to a clearer understanding of the place and relevance of religious life today.

The over-all impression I received from the book is that of a view from "the outside." I presume that the historical data are accurate, but there is a lack of insight, I think, into the spirit of the older communities in particular. And without such an insight, a complete understanding of the problem is unlikely.

While I wouldn't endorse this book as a "must" for every religious' reading list, it does contain some valuable insights. These, I feel, coupled with the lived experience of religious life, could suggest some valuable ideas for adaptation within our own communities.

**Hearers of the Word.** By Karl Rahner. Completely rewritten by J. B. Metz; translated by Michael Richards; New York: Herder and Herder, 1969. Pp. x-180. Cloth, \$6.50.

**Evolutionary Philosophies and Contemporary Theology.** By Eric C. Rust. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969. Pp. 256. Cloth, \$6.50.

**The Life of the Spirit in the World Today.** By Gordon S. Wakefield. New York: Macmillan, 1969. Pp. xi-176. Cloth, \$4.95.

*Reviewer by Father Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M., editor of this review.*

The temporal dimension and the free, personal nature of human existence have never been totally ignored by sound Christian theology. Yet recent developments have enabled us to gain greater insight into these fundamental categories. Three recent books, taken together, pose some important questions for the perceptive Christian in search of a realistic spirituality in our day.

In *Hearers of the Word*, Karl Rahner skillfully analyzes man's pre-conceptual awareness of being and man's freedom as incarnate spirit whose personality develops only in time, to show that each individual has not only the capacity to hear, a divine revelation if one is addressed to him, but even the duty to listen (to look within human history) for God's word even if such a listening reveals nothing but God's silence.

For Rahner metaphysics, anthropology, and philosophy of religion are closely knit together in one reflective process. This is important to realize if one is to grant the validity of writing a 200-page book to make the comparatively narrow point described in the preceding paragraph. So tightly reasoned is Rahner's analysis, in fact, that it implies most of what he said in *Spirit in the World*, as well as an abundance of Thomistic metaphysics on which he could not touch in either book. *Hearers of the Word* is a rigorous demonstration of its thesis — an elucidation of the structure of human consciousness, unimpeachable within its Thomistic framework, establishing the a priori conditions on man's part for hearing God's word. It is an important classic for those who accept the validity of the Thomistic categories, an ingeniously constructed bridge between metaphysics and theology, astride a chasm to which too little attention had been previously devoted in scholasticism.

Rahner's work will be practically unintelligible to those not very well grounded in Thomism, however, and few outside his school of "transcendental Thomists" will be inclined to accept his conception of the philosophy of religion. Ordinarily the discipline is understood in a more empirical way: as a study of the concrete forms assumed by religion in various cultures and a reflective effort to draw general conclusions from the many individual facts. Eric Rust's study of evo-

lutionary philosophies is not exactly "a philosophy of religion" in this systematic sense either; yet it is one of the finest contributions to the field in recent years.

Rust's initial chapter deals masterfully with the nature of the philosophical enterprise. Describing philosophy (or metaphysics) as an analogical activity, by which a man selects (consciously or otherwise) a model from his experience on the basis of which to interpret reality, Rust insists that the sincere Christian can and must philosophize as a Christian. Certainly his interpretation of the "facts" will reveal this initial bias; but this is the point: There is no such thing as a wholly objective, impartial grasp of reality — everyone has his bias.

What model shall the Christian use to interpret his world — himself — God? Rust makes an excellent case for the selection of a personal model. He devotes sympathetic yet critical attention to no fewer than seventeen key thinkers in the evolutionary and process traditions and accepts gratefully their valid emphasis on development, on the dynamic nature of reality. Yet he points out how in most cases (virtually all, except for William Temple and Teilhard de Chardin), the selection of an inadequate model makes the various systems less than ideal as vehicles for Christian philosophy. Neither matter, nor mind, nor biological organism can suffice as the Christian's paradigm, whereas the category of the personal, with its emphasis on self-transcendence and affective relatedness, can do so.

The author's positive contributions come in the last chapter, where he is heavily indebted to John Macmurray's fruitful understanding of the person as agent rather than subject — as primarily doer who meets the other in his activity, and only secondarily (though essentially) knower who subsequently systematizes his experience by reflection and construction.

Gordon Wakefield's book is more directly practical than those of Rahner and Rust. Chief editor of *The Epworth Press* (London) and a Methodist minister active in the British Council of Churches, Wakefield takes an approach that is at once historical and constructive in his effort to suggest practical guidelines for a contemporary spirituality. Having examined quite competently the teaching of the New Testament on prayer and the spiritual life, he goes on to trace the development of some major themes in the history of Christianity. Of particular interest here and in the subsequent analysis of the contemporary scene is his discussion of the "theology of protest" and its concomitant, often charismatic, spirituality.

The contemporary scene is marked, of course, by the presence of the death-of-God theologians and the secularizationists, both of whom have something to tell us. Their message is of limited, and often wholly negative, value, however, and Wakefield rightly turns for philosophical-theological support to the more positive assistance to be found in constructive metaphysics. Specifically, he finds in the process philosophy of Whitehead some important, concrete implications for modern spirituality. But his acceptance of Whitehead is, unfortunately, global and uncritical — so much so that this section of the book contrasts vividly with the rest of his material, characterized as it is by a quite balanced and mature approach.

The positive contributions of *The Life of the Spirit in the World of Today*, apart from some fine material in the section on Whitehead, are to be found in its last chapter. Needed as ingredients for a contemporary spirituality are a rigorously experiential basis, due reflection on our human and Christian experience, a healthy respect for the traditions of the past, sound discipline, and a

cultivation of the awareness of God's presence.

All three of these books are concerned with the same problem: contemporary man's relationship to God. All three emphasize the important fact that a view of God is at the same time at least implicitly a view of man who formulates that view. And all three call into question in varying degrees the Greco-Christian interpretation of God's eternity (and, in the case of Rust and Wakefield, God's omniscience and omnipotence as well). These are the burning issues of contemporary theism, and Christian life in our age will undoubtedly be shaped to a very large extent by our response to these challenges.

**Contemporary Spirituality.** Edited by Robert W. Gleason, S. J. New York: Macmillan, 1968. Pp. viii-343. Cloth, \$6.95.

*Reviewed by Father Maury Smith, O.F.M., a member of the Province of the Sacred Heart currently pursuing doctoral studies in pastoral counseling.*

My reaction to this imposing volume is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, its twenty-one essays cover the most disparate aspects of Christian life today in the most competent way (since the contributors are all widely respected experts in their fields). The viewpoints are those of biblical theology, religious asceticism, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and moral theology; and there is certainly something to be said for publishing all these essays in one, easily accessible volume.

But on the other hand, so much of the material is evidently dated — the essays were published in various periodicals from 1951 to 1966. This disadvantage could have been overcome if the editor had seen fit to contribute a unifying prologue or epilogue to the book. He did write the fourth essay, on "Love of Neighbor," especially for this volume, but this does not seem to acquit

him of his responsibility as an editor.

The book is rather a summary of the recent past than a thrust forward. Regardless of the age of some of the contributions, they are good to have in one volume — a volume which deals with virtually every major area of human and Christian life with any bearing on spirituality.

**God and the World.** By John B. Cobb, Jr. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969. Pp. 139. Paper, \$2.95.

**Interpreting the Doctrine of God.** By Charles N. Bent, S.J. Glen Rock, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1969. Pp. vii-344. Cloth, \$5.95; paper, \$3.95.

*Reviewed by Father Michael D. Meilach, editor of this review.*

These two books concern the crisis in contemporary Christian doctrine on God; the authors seek in different ways to point the way toward a revitalized Christian theism.

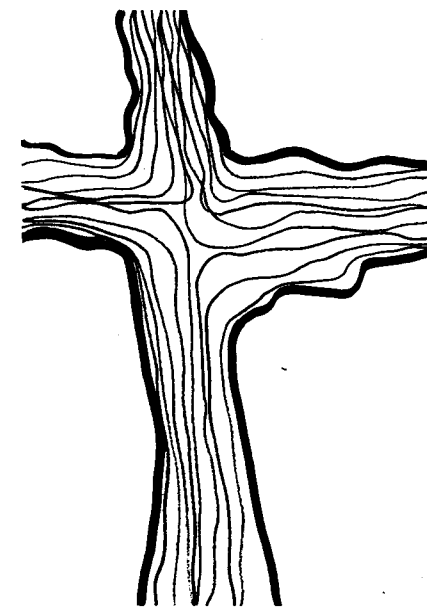
Dr. Cobb's book is a series of lectures left in an attractive, informal style for publication. The traditional emphasis on God as omnipotent creator (where power means ability to overcome physical resistance) is rightly rejected, as are the exaggerated forms of the parallel emphases: God as Lord of history, lawgiver, judge, etc. It is not that these lines of thought have no validity at all; they do. But, Dr. Cobb maintains with a good deal of justification, they have no contact with the "sensitivity" of many Christians in our day. They are, moreover, not specifically Christian in origin or in character; they tend to make God responsible for evil; and they do not do justice to man's experience of himself as a free being.

With many contemporary writers, the author seeks to stress instead God's presence as one who beckons us toward a future which is ours to create. Dr. Cobb himself seems

to bend over backward, here, to be "empirical"; I think his philosophical approach, keenly challenging in some respects, would have benefited by some more explicit reliance on the need for revelation, which is brought out in different ways by Rahner and Blondel.

The third chapter is the core of the book. It contains a good number of quite helpful insights but is, overall, somewhat disappointing. The author sets forth a panentheist position which is, to my mind, so rationalistic and so bogged down in pseudo-empirical questions (where is God?) as to border on the distasteful and irreverent. The intentions are, to be sure, of the finest; and such valuable Whiteheadian concepts as "adventure" and "peace" need emphasizing. But as long as Cobb insists on following Whitehead as uncritically as he does here, I do not see how he will be able to do justice to the Christian theism he so ardently longs to justify.

The fourth chapter, on evil and eschatology, is limited by the same



aestheticism and rationalism as the third. It is certainly an advance over the Augustinian theodicy, but I must confess that I am not particularly attracted to the author's conception of the next life as a continuation, to all intents, of this one. Belief in God certainly does "sustain a hope which supports an understanding of the world which in turn resolves the existential problems of theodicy" (p. 102). But the whole thing is not quite so neat as Dr. Cobb makes it.

The ensuing discussion on Christianity as a religion is well balanced. It is foolish to quibble about the word religion. Let us admit that Christianity is one of those things called "religions," since it involves a suprasensible world, a sense of absoluteness, cultic ceremony, and an interest in spiritual states; but let us also realize that religiosity is not its finest feature.

Theology is still possible, Dr. Cobb concludes, if we have the courage to come to grips with the quite different mentality of the "postmodern" world. The nine-year-old material in this chapter is, despite the author's insistence to the contrary, rather out of date. One would think that Hume and Ayer had long since been laid to rest, and that Christians today have more important things to think out than an answer to positivism in all its atrophied forms. They do, and Dr. Cobb knows it: the task is to take both God and the world seriously, and to work out an understanding of God's immanence and transcendence which will be, not a coldly rationalistic system but a living awareness — an understanding vital enough to transform the world.

Father Bent approaches his subject with a quite different methodology. He begins by giving the impression that he thinks Dewart, Newman, Rahner, and Lonergan have something to say today. Unfortunately one is never sure exact-

ly what they are supposed to have something to say about: the problem of God, the development of doctrine, or epistemology. To be sure, these themes can be interwoven fruitfully. Here, they are not.

The introductory chapter, which should have been integrated into the next four, gives vital statistics of the four thinkers named above and a superficial description of each one's contribution. Some three hundred pages later, after devoting a chapter to each figure, the author once again informs us that they have something to say today — only he is no longer so sure about Dewart.

The chapter on Dewart, a straight summary of *The Future of Belief*, was so to speak stillborn because it appeared at the same time as Dewart's *The Foundations of Belief*. The chapter on Newman is a similar summary of huge chunks of *The Grammar of Assent* and the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. The one devoted to Rahner includes references to several sources, however, as does that on Lonergan. But in each case there is the same non-committal digesting of the thinker's every move, without any attempt to highlight key issues, evaluate what is being summarized, or even compare it with the content of the other chapters.

It is extremely difficult to understand why this book was published. If Father Bent had really discussed these authors and integrated their contributions systematically in a synthetic vision, he could have published a book either for scholars or for the general reader, depending on the level of the discussion. As it is, the summaries become so technical and detailed that the non-specialist will find them most difficult to follow. The scholar? He will long ago have read the original sources and, hopefully, found that the authors have something to say today.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

- Cobb, John B., Jr., *God and the World*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969. Pp. 139. Paper, \$2.95.
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