

EXTRACTS

LAY SPIRITUALITY is a difficult subject, for in some respects there can be no such thing since all 'spirituality' is the same—the life of Christ on earth. Nevertheless the layman has problems to face in this living, problems that are in detail not the same as those faced by religious and clergy for whom so much 'spiritual' writing is provided. *Le Supplément de la Vie Spirituelle* (February 1952) tackles the whole problem in its usual thorough and scientific way. Père Congar, O.P., considering how the layman is 'in the world but not of it', shows how the Christian must be creative with God in the world and not destructive; this is his free vocation.

Christian freedom is not the freedom of a tourist or of an amateur and it is not in this sense that we are to be pilgrims on earth. It is the condition of one who, delivered from the service of slavery fulfilled by necessity, receives a new task, or rather quite simply the same task but as a vocation and a service of love. For the Father delivers the world to us not as egotistical and carnal beings, but as his children, his family, the body of his only Son, to us—all-as-one, to us as living in charity. . . . He gives us the same world and yet not the same world; it is the world as the Father's domain. . . . We are very seriously stewards of goods which do not belong to us but which belong to the Father and are destined by him for his whole family. This quotation may give the taste of the article, but it is impossible to convey its breadth. M. Jean Guittou enlarges on one of the elements in the problem—the layman can be a 'prophet', for he follows Christ, the prophet and priest.

I would say at once that in the *historical order*, Jesus was a prophet, a layman put to death by the chief priest. But in the *real and fundamental order* he is the unique Sacrificer and the single Priest and Pontiff. In the unity of his theandric being we can see these two elements combined. . . . Christ is at once the prophet and the priest, prophet according to the temporal and historic order, and priest according to the eternal and ontological order. . . . In our day what we call the 'laity' seems to be an original development of catholic prophecy. The layman makes up part of the temporal community. He is not a member of the ecclesiastical community which is separate. He does not want to be a deacon in 'civvies', a clandestine clergyman, a kind of clerical 'fifth column' hidden in the world. . . .

The same subject was dealt with also in the October 1951 issue of *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven* (Louvain). The place of the layman in the mystery of the Church shows that he is

a living member of a holy society. To look upon him only as a

subject of an ecclesiastical society is in fact to misunderstand religious doctrine. If he is such, then he must remain passive; and then he is no longer Catholic.

To be a Catholic is to have catholic, universal, interests; to be obedient but at the same time to encourage personal initiative—as a *living* member—under that obedience; and thus to realise more fully what the hierarchy is and stands for.

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THE THEOLOGIAN without the Spirit, that is without the inspiration of grace, can become a religious philosopher but with living faith he is a seeker after and lover of wisdom. Père Chenu, O.P., uses the figure of Abelard in a brilliant essay in *Esprit et Vie* December 1951 (Maredsous) to bring out some of his observations on this topic. Abelard reveals three elements in his mentality: psychologically a curiosity of spirit in a wide sense seeking always God the inaccessible leaping up from the profundity of his faith, pedagogically the 'Art of faith' bending his great dialectic to the science of God, and theologially showing that it is at once an art and a science controlled by the seeking spirit.

Wisdom of faith, and not wisdom of the philosophers, theology must never be satisfied with the reasons which it advances, maintaining in them against themselves the primacy of mystery. The theologian can only work in the measure in which he enters into the mystery and holds himself there. There is one essential part of him, concrete and intimate, which the pure objectivity of knowledge must re-assimilate, and which belongs to that personal relation with God, arising from the union of the gift of grace and the freedom of his faith. Whence comes that kind of awe, that reverential spirit of fear, which saturates him through and through, not only in his spontaneous reflexes but also in his most technical analyses. Abelard's dialectic did not safeguard this religious modesty, which here is not an additional quality but the very condition of thought.

The theologian is a 'mystagogue', as the Fathers maintained; he is a witness and not merely a 'professor'. Abelard with all his astonishing powers remained a professor. The theologian must always be like Jacob and the angel as he wrestles with divine mystery.

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An article in *The Catholic Worker* (New York), February, tells of the progress of the Carthusians in America. Two hundred young men have applied for admission; twelve so far have been chosen and are being prepared for the first foundations at Sky Farm (Whitingham, Vt.)—a name which sounds like a weak joke. One of these men is a negro. The news of the contemplative orders in U.S.A. is indeed encouraging.

OUR LADY'S place in the life and devotion of the Church is receiving a great deal of attention. The *American Ecclesiastical Review*, in the October 1951 number already referred to, celebrated the Council of Chalcedon of October 451, when the relation between the Son of God and his Mother remained the touchstone for the truth of the incarnation and redemption. And a commentator on the constitution which defined the Assumption shows how the present Holy Father upheld the second-century tradition concerning our Lady as the New Eve and developed it in terms of the part she took with her Son in the redemption of mankind. And now the Dominicans have started a Centre of Marian Studies at Fatima, the first fruits of which is a little book called *This is Fatima: A Sacrament of the Grace of Conversion*, by Fr Joseph Agius, O.P. Together with this useful summary of the history and meaning of the appearances comes a monthly review, *The Voice of Fatima*, published in several languages (English Editor, Leiria, Portugal). These publications may help those who are yet hesitant about this centre of devotion to our Lady in modern times. Readers of Spanish will find a good deal about Fatima, too, in *La Vida Sobrenatural* (Salamanca).

In CROSS & CROWN (Chicago), December 1951, Professor Peers writes of St Teresa's *Letters* which he has just translated.

Vie Spirituelle devotes its November issue mainly to the question of 'Hospitality and Charity'. Père Daniélou opens with an article on the theology of hospitality.

SUPPLEMENT of *La Vie Spirituelle* (November 15th, 1951) is concerned with psychoanalysis and 'deep' analysis. It also has an account of the Anglican community life at Mirfield, Nashdom, Cowley, and the convents of women as well as of men. The development of this movement in the last seventy years is most encouraging.

ORATE FRATRES presents a bumper double number in honour of its twenty-fifth anniversary in October 1951. The original cover design by Eric Gill and David Jones is repeated on this issue and reminds us that this liturgical review began with a flourish which it has maintained with the possible exception of the subsequent designs.

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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