

of the laity as fully 'qualified' members of the Church in their own right; while conversely the corresponding remarks implying the general superiority of the clergy are to be taken in the opposite way (if this is caricature, I do not think it is unfair, at any rate to the superficialities of the texts).

Secondly, there is the question of the sense in which one can talk of the Church *and* the world (the Council talked of the Church *in* the world). Cardinal Bea, using St Augustine's terminology, sets the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena* side by side as if they were two parallel entities, which is entirely foreign to St Augustine's conception, though it is clear historically how such a picture could arise.

Now I can see three ways in which one might talk of the Church and the world in this sort of way. There is the theological antithesis between the Church and the world, which we find in St John, where the world is the preserve of antichrist. There is the empirical contrast between the Church as a human society, and other human societies, which becomes important particularly when the Church has an independent civil and political existence, as she still has. And thirdly, one may distinguish the world as the raw material of redemption, from the Church as the achievement of redemption. None of these justifies the way the Cardinal talks; and it is significant that he finds great difficulty in ascribing any real worth to temporal realities and values, because he has prevented himself from seeing the real continuity between the temporal order and the eternal (churchly). It is the Church which gives value to the world, by taking it into itself, as the new redeemed creation. The 'world' is potential 'church', the 'church-in-becoming'

(or refusing-to-become). And that, in varying degrees, is the situation of each one of us; no line can be drawn between 'church' and 'un-church' (and St Augustine knew that too).

And this brings me to my third difficulty, which is about the method appropriate to ecclesiology. The Church is an object both of faith and of experience, and it is necessary to talk about it in terms both of theological *a priori* (revelation) and in empirical terms. Protestant thought has, I suppose, tended to be over empirical, but there can be no doubt that Catholics have grossly overplayed the *a priori* aspect, and Cardinal Bea is no exception. One cannot 'solve' existential problems simply by citing an *a priori* theological datum. For example, the theological assertion that the act of faith is of its nature free does not 'solve' the problem of dogmatic authority. If anything, it precisely creates the problem, by introducing into ordinary experience a dimension which appears to contradict ordinary experience. One of the normal results of theological speculation should be to undermine all facile solutions to human problems.

However, it must be said that the Cardinal's book is a not unfriendly witness to the reality and importance of the *a priori* aspect of the Church. Not many men would include a chapter on angels in a book on 'the Church and mankind'. And I suppose that the Cardinal is right to say that God is 'the final secret'. Modern Christians are prone to a peculiar parochialism of the here and now, even if 'here' includes the whole world (which it doesn't often in practice). The theological data of faith are just as real as our empirical experiences.

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**MONASTIC RENEWAL**, by Columba Cary-Elwes, O.S.B. Herder, New York. 1967. 256 pp. \$5.95.

Vatican II requires every religious order to re-examine what it is about. First and foremost it should find its roots in the gospel, then in the founder's rule, and then in its sound tradition. After drawing our attention to these principles, Dom Columba in an introductory chapter discusses such matters as habit, studies, early rising, manual work, and so on. Chapter II surveys the Benedictine situation today, in its slightly bewildering variety of precept and practice. (Prinknash and the Subiaco congregation seem incidentally to have escaped due notice here.) We then move on to the finest chapter of the book: one feels the sure touch of

the historian as one after the other the scriptures, pre-Benedictine monasticism, and the Rule come under the microscope. The teen-age Antony fleeing to the desert, Pachomius lovingly instructing his novices, Basil late in life demoting penance, and promoting love of neighbour from 162nd to second in his list of virtues. History can rarely have been so readable. Through Cluny with its lust for liturgy, through Chaise-Dieu with its holiness, apostolate and explosive growth, through Cistercian saga, through finally the founding of the universities and the rise of the friars, to the closing curtain of the Black Death in 1348. This

chapter concludes with a remarkable essay on monastic schools, yesterday and today, concluding that they are certainly traditional and on balance desirable.

The final three chapters discuss obedience, poverty, and prayer. Of these, that on obedience is perhaps the least convincing. What happens when the command of the superior no longer fits the inspiration given us by the Holy Ghost? This problem is only fully stated in the penultimate paragraph, and, of the openings envisaged here, all are ruled out on traditional lines by the conclusion. Poverty is a grave problem today, and perhaps the most we can do is to follow Dom Columba in being very concerned about it. The chapter on prayer is resolute: the greatest witness needed today, we are told, is that someone really believes God is present and that we are made to worship him. The atmosphere of prayer constitutes the Benedictine house: the contemplative is one who lives continually in the presence of God.

Dom Columba knows his scripture, and indeed his psychology, and one can feel his great sympathy with current missionary aspirations (even if he does finally advise us to 'stay put'.) As to wisdom, he has some very pithy phrases: '*Lectio divina* is more a way of reading than a class of books'; and 'The art displayed . . . is an index to the spiritual understanding of the community.' Perhaps his most significant option is to remain attached to *life*: one sees him moving away at once from any movement that has ceased to influence society at its point of growth.

Generous historical sources are quoted. But on the contemporary level, excessive influence is perhaps allowed to Jean Leclercq, while (for example) nothing from Bouyer or Taizé receives a mention. Partly as a result, a number of key questions do not make their appearance. Should there *be* a habit? Does a monk *differ* from a religious, or a secular priest, or is it all a matter of degree? What is a monk's specific role in the Church? Is it just prayer, or witness too (as sometimes suggested from page 143 onwards?), Should monks be priests? Is the monastic ideal Christian or pre-Christian? And then there is that awful dilemma about a monk's charity. A monk prays for all, but should he do *more*? Is he entitled to limit the direct assistance he gives to his fellow-men to a small community circle where only restricted exchange can take place, or should he undertake a limited but direct apostolate towards the world in general? Cistercians forbid such work, while many

Benedictines prescribe it. Cistercians have argued that such activity removes a man's mind from God for most of the day, and so defeats the purpose of monasticism. Benedictines might replay that to refuse such service is to stick to the pre-Christian monastic tradition, whereas this too has something to learn from the New Testament ideal of love. Cistercians use practical arguments; Benedictines argue on principle. Putting the matter as a crucial question, we may ask: *is a life like the Cistercian too retired?* Dom Columba repeatedly handles this issue, but his thinking does seem to be oscillatory: on nine occasions we find him answering this crucial question affirmatively, and on six occasions with a negative (pp. 19, 86, 102, 109, 139, 144, 146, 208, 210; 12, 103, 104, 143, 144, 210). For example, on page 86, Origen's judgement that there is no virtue in flight from the world is ratified. Ourselves, we would offer an affirmative reply. An ideal solution might be to abolish the monastic schism, and have monks of all tendencies in most monasteries.

Lastly, is the religious life, with its dedication to the pursuit of perfection, in any way a higher vocation than marriage? Dom Columba says no, but none of the sources he quotes goes so far. Obviously, for an individual, nothing is better than *his* vocation, whichever it turns out to be. But that does not exclude comparisons: we may say that Our Lady's vocation was more sublime than, say, the reader's. And if in general such comparisons are of no great utility, they are of real interest when a young man stands at the threshold of life, trying to decide his vocation. The religious life for such a young man may not be harder to live, but it is certainly harder to *choose*. And since no one is going to make the *harder choice* without good reason, Dom Columba's thesis, if accepted, is likely to reduce all orders to perhaps one per cent of their present size. Of course, this may be right. But it should not be lightly proposed, with no discussion of the traditional opinion. As it is, on pages 107, 207, propositions dangerously close to Mt. 19: 21 ('If you would be perfect, go sell . . .') are summarily dismissed as 'Manichean'.

Substantial agreement is too much to hope for at this stage. But no informed discussion of monasticism can proceed without a proper historical background, and it is in providing this in brief and readable form that Dom Columba has excelled.

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