

OBITER

NEW LIFE, in its number for July/August 1950 prints a translation of the third and last of Cardinal Suhard's great pastoral letters, 'The Priest in the Modern World'. Here is an exposition of the theology of the priesthood which, while making no claim to be a treatise of pastoral theology, is in fact illustrated by examples which provide guidance in the practical order. Naturally the papal encyclicals on the Priesthood and the Liturgy have been freely drawn upon, but the finished work is an integral unity, at once vigorous and condensed. The priest is seen as a paradoxical figure reflecting the paradox of the Christian mystery, for he is both transcendent and incarnate, a man of God and a man among men. His is the office of mediator—not an intermediate being like an angel, still less a magician or a superman—but one who continues Christ's work through space and time. Participating in the eternal priesthood of Christ, he is cut off from the world ('because he is no one's, he belongs to all'), and yet he is 'visibly marked by his century, his surroundings, his heredity'.

'A craftsman of peace yet a minister of disquietude, an apocalyptic warrior, and yet a suffering servant, the priest is an enigma to the world. . . . Strange destiny of the priest; to be of the world yet not of it; to be of the world just because he is not of it. Until the end, this innate paradox will arm his brethren against him; he will be refused his rights in the world. Yet, till the end, this peerless "stranger" will be the salt to combat insipidity, the hope of rescue from the wreck. The first function of the priesthood in the world is to prevent it from becoming a closed society. Its first duty is to remain transcendent. The world can only save itself by becoming superhuman. It can only become fully the City of men by becoming the City of God.'

Cardinal Suhard also sketches the elements of a theology of the laity, though here again his 'purpose is not to treat directly of the problem of the laity but only to show that only with them and through them the mediation of the priest has meaning and is complete'. By baptism the laity 'share although in a very humble way in the Priesthood of the unique Priest'.

'"According to their condition"; that is the essential qualification. For it would be wrong to imagine that the character of Baptism, that of Confirmation and that of Holy Orders, are simply three degrees of the same kind, a direct and so to speak quantitative extension of one another. What unites them is an analogical relation—in other words, an ever more vivid resemblance and an ever more real participation in the priesthood of the Incarnate Word. The idea

of the priesthood implied by the baptismal character is not of a complete priesthood but of a priesthood on a reduced scale. This, Confirmation and Holy Orders will enlarge, just as a statue reproduces in greater size the original model. The baptismal character is simply the character of a member, a simple "delegation to divine worship". It is simply the right and the fact of being incorporated in Christ the Priest and of entering into his eternal mediation of religion and salvation. After the fact of union with the Saviour by grace, it is the reason why it can be said that the Christian is another Christ. This real consecration does not confer on the baptised the power of representing the Church, but that of being represented. It does not give them the power of being consecrators but only that of uniting themselves to the oblation and of consenting to the consecration.'

That oblation on the part of the laity is to be an active one and a corporate one, and an oblation in one's own context:

'The offering from Christians must not be uniform. To each vocation will correspond a special oblation. The worker will offer up the monotony of work on the belt, or the joy of the completed product; the mother of a family, her domestic worries, or her fears for her ailing child. The scientist will offer the world of thought, the universe made captive in breadth and depth. To scholar, philosopher, sociologist, artist, there falls the task of gathering up the world and raising it up to the Father, at this turning point of its destiny.'

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THE JOURNAL OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY. Vol. 1, No. 1 April, 1950 (twice yearly, annual subscription 25s. or 15s. a copy; Faber & Faber). The publishers are to be congratulated on this new venture. At first sight it might appear that the journal had cast its net rather too widely, but more careful consideration shows that the very width of its scope should serve to correct both parochialism of outlook and some of the limitations of overspecialisation. A really valuable feature is the inclusion of articles on the Biblical doctrine of the Church, for the exclusion of this element has rendered so much ecclesiastical writing meaningless. If the standard of the first number is maintained, and a glance at the editorial board augurs well for the future, the journal should be indispensable.

THE INNES REVIEW, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2s. 6d.) appears for the first time, sponsored by the Scottish Catholic Historical Committee and devoted to all aspects of Scottish Catholic history. The chairman of the Committee, Fr Anthony Ross, O.P., opens with a survey of Scottish Catholic historians, and there are articles on Bishop Kyle and Archbishop Wauchope.

NAUTICUS.