

him. The interior life is a truly happy life, for it makes God alone live in our hearts, it makes our hearts live in God alone and delight only in him. Happy is the life of a soul where God reigns, and which he possesses entirely! It is a life separated from the world and hidden in God, a life of love and holy liberty, a life which enables the soul to find in the kingdom of God its joy and its peace, its glory, its true pleasure and its permanent greatness. These are the goods and riches which the world can neither give nor take away.

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We imagine that someone given to recollection and the interior life leads a sad and unhappy life. The reality is quite the contrary. Happiness, even on earth, consists in possessing God: the more we renounce ourselves to be united to him, the more we cease to be miserable and become truly happy. But the devil takes advantage of our ignorance and weakness to cast us into continual errors and anxieties. We must escape from these to make ourselves capable of the sovereign happiness of this life, which consists in seeing God and enjoying the gift of his holy presence, without which even the highest of the Seraphim would be unhappy. A soul which contemplated God unceasingly and held itself always ready to accomplish his will, would be truly happy.



## EXTRACTS

PÈRE M. D. CHENU, O.P., in an article translated in *CROSS CURRENTS* (Vol. 7, No. 2, Broadway, New York) points out that after all sorts of other theologies, such as the theology of war, of business, of history, have been worked out since the Reformation, it is only now in our own day that anyone has given thought to 'the theology of work'. And in the article he sets the object of human labour in perspective for true theologians to consider.

*Man and the Universe:* work is located at their junction, as well as at the junction of spirit and matter. Man is master of the universe: the place of God, the vocation of man, according to the formulas revealed in *Genesis*. This should be seen not as an initial pre-historic

episode, but in a cosmic unfolding of the divine plan. Man is a collaborator in creation, and the demi-urge of his evolution in discovery, exploitation, and the spiritualization of nature. This action on nature (work) is a divine participation, even in its risk. . . . Finally, the *Incarnation*. God made man; everything that is human is material for grace; it enters there twice, both as work of man, and as principle of community, which is also a world of grace. The Incarnation continued: the Mystical Body, this theme which from now on will be classic for a spirituality in which the world will find its equilibrium and its Christian position. . . .

Is this a new spirituality? No, it is that of *Genesis*, St Paul, St Thomas and of our primary dogmas. . . . For too long Christians have not taken into their consciousness these implicit powers, and their spirituality, like their apostolate, has contracted into 'the interior life'.

Certainly today Christians, here and there, are at last struggling to synthesize a spirituality of the interior life with the spirituality of the community, of society, and so of work, by re-introducing the basic truth of the Mystical Body and the basic action of the liturgy. But it is a difficult task. Donald Thornton tackles the task firmly in the June issue of *Spiritual Life* (Quarterly, Brooklin, U.S.A.):

A more mature and socially efficacious spiritual growth can take place in the average layman by *not* withdrawing from society. . . .

Since the layman is in and of the world he must proceed to God through the world. . . . Of course the cycle is not complete, nor will our sanctity be complete when we return to contemplation.

But the important point is that we must not neglect or underestimate the potential of spiritual growth open to us through action.

Later in the article Mr Thornton begins to apply these principles to details, in order to avoid the dangers of activism and 'the heresy of action'.

But there is always the danger that we may falsely identify our interior life as 'spiritual' and the exterior life as 'secular', when in actuality our exterior life must be an extension of our inner spirituality into the world. . . . The fount of life for the priest, religious or layman engaged in social action is to be found in contemplation and the liturgy, but because these essential acts are vivifying they impel the social actionist to further action and greater efforts.

The synthesis of action and contemplation is certainly one of the problems of today when we are confronted with so many who are almost wholly involved in 'good works' and others too ready to run away from everything and become simply 'contemplatives'. We have to find a way of infusing contemplation in to the actionist, and provid-

ing channels of action for the contemplatives. It is good to find the problem tackled so well in these journals.

The Editor of the Quarterly *Mount Carmel* declares one of the principal ways of achieving this synthesis to be by way of the retreat movement (Summer 1957). As he says it in the primary movement behind Catholic Action. And yet the modern retreat must loose some of the shackles of nineteenth-century formalism if it is to achieve the 'community' effect of the true spiritual growth of the soul. It is true enough for the Editor to write:

When Christ had ascended into heaven the apostles, the future pillars of the Church, retired to the Cenacle where for a period of ten days they persevered in prayer with Mary the Mother of God, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost. It was in the Cenacle that the Retreat Movement was born. Were it not for that first retreat the apostles would not . . . have become founders of Christ's Mystical Body on earth.

But the gathering of our Lady and the apostles in the upper room was rather different from the average retreat. There it was a common action, they were all together persevering in prayer. Here we foster an individualistic spirit of piety in most of our retreats; the retreatants look down their noses at each other, find anything like a *Dialogue Mass* distracting to their own interior prayer, and have nothing to do with anyone except God and the preacher of the retreat. The retreat movement in this country will have to change considerably before it becomes the power it could be in sanctifying action for the apostolate in our own society.



## REVIEWS

COMMUNAL LIFE. 'Religious Life' Series, No. 8. (Blackfriars, London; 19s. 6d.)

This is an excellent translation of the conferences given in France to a group of religious women and those who have to deal with them. Like the other volumes in the series, they attain a very high standard and will prove of great use to all who study the theory and practice of the religious state. Attempts have been made in recent years, even among Catholics, to question the utility and meaning of the religious state in an age when the lay apostolate is so much to the fore. These conferences provide an answer. The theme which runs through them all, and which is dear to the organizers of these reunions, is that the religious life is not something parallel to the ordinary practice of