

Should rules be so revised, and should—this is the other condition stipulated by the Cardinal—time be so allocated as to allow the individual nun greater initiative and a personal sphere of apostolic activity outside her convent? The answer will surely be Yes, if one reads carefully the excellent historical analysis given in Part One: most rules are decisively influenced by the attitude towards women at the time of their elaboration. Since then, however, woman's position in the world has changed tremendously, and the field in which she can exercise her activity, both professional and apostolic, is incomparably larger than that of her sisters in the past. As were her founders in their time, she should continue to be a pioneer, realizing today, as then, her evangelical ideal within her self-chosen community, but limiting herself no longer to the traditional activities of school and hospital; she ought to enlarge these to include the circles beyond those committed to her immediate care and thus use all her gifts, both natural and supernatural, to get her message across to the pagan world by means formerly unthought-of, but now within her reach.

When Cardinal Suenens advocates something like the emancipation of the nun he in no way means to attack, or expects major superiors to change, the permanent foundations of all religious life. What the Church, so he says, asks of its most dedicated members is that the conditions of their lives should be such that they might become the most useful instruments for a Christian renewal of the world. His criticisms, as well as all the reforms listed, might seem formidable in the aggregate, but to no congregation do they apply *in toto*, and there is probably none that has not yet set out to realize one or the other of *The New Dimensions of the Apostolate* (sub-title). There is nothing that should cause fear or indignation in this frank book. On the contrary, it is encouraging to hear from someone in the Cardinal's position that by her vocation the nun is 'the immediate extension of the priesthood', (p. 99) and that, faithful in an adult, responsible way to her vows and her rule, she need not fear the risk of confronting modern men and women in any way of life accessible to her and in need of the Word Incarnate.

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THE BOW IN THE CLOUDS, by Daniel Berrigan, S.J.; Burns & Oates, 21s.  
NEW SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION, by Thomas Merton; Burns & Oates, 25s.

*Vae mihi si non evangelizavero*, a principle which surely implies 'understood of the people' in one way or another; and no question facing the Church is more urgent than that of finding a language such as people will understand—people whose grandfathers at least seemed to meet what the Church said with understanding, though perhaps with disagreement. Your typical modern hearer shows a fine quality of courteous interest; he listens, but is totally baffled. Yes, he will tell you, it all seems to hang together in a way; but what's it all in aid of? what does it have to do with me? why should I bother?

Let there be no complacency, but this breakdown in communications may not be wholly our fault. The gospel always presupposed a certain consciousness of questioning and need, fundamental in fact but still particular: it must always seem meaningless or irrelevant to men schooled by distraction to concentrate upon other questionings, other needs. A man dying of starvation ceases, once he gets past a certain point, to feel hungry at all. Post-Renaissance man has chosen to have an increasingly narrow range of preoccupations, and his habitual language has shrunk accordingly: ultimate answers will never strike him as meaningful, so long as his conceptual system precludes the formulation of ultimate questions. Perhaps our immediate task is a negative sort of *praeparatio evangelica*, a matter of demolition and site clearance: meanwhile, the positive builders can be choosing and polishing their tools.

We often hear about the shortage of priests, but in this situation the shortage of prophets is possibly more grievous; and we should be particularly glad about writers like Fathers Berrigan and Merton, priests but poets too, men rich in the *bonitas imaginationis* which St Thomas rated even higher than *bonitas morum* in the prophet's scale of equipment. Fr Berrigan has vast respect for language, the one and only secular sacrament, the word as efficacious sign: in an age peculiarly given to the profanation of that particular mystery, he is the ideal man for company and guidance on a slow exploration of scripture in sequence, leading to a jumping-up of dry bones, a rebirth of images. It is a rewarding process, a continual production of the living point where previously we had only known the answer—provided always that you speak the language to begin with, as not all of us do.

Fr Merton needs no kind of introduction or recommendation: this book is an enormously expanded version of the original *Seeds of Contemplation*, a rich collection of more or less random thoughts on the spiritual life, necessarily frustrated when its vain hope is *contemplata tradere* (as if you and I could be saved the bother) but beautifully good at catching in new sharp words the point and direction and taste of Christian life. But, for communication across that gulf? Attention at least may be captured by the briskly epigrammatic manner, which occasionally strains charity: there are passages in this book which can be read too easily as invitations to superior sneering at other people's poverty. And there is a certain unctimonious churchiness of voice and manner, a tendency to begin sentences with *And* and *For*, a poetical remoteness of décor which may only add to the hopelessness, the sense of irrelevance felt by those across the gulf, even though they may be stretching out their hands in longing to get across. 'His love spreads the shade of the sycamore tree over my head and sends the water-boy along the edge of the wheatfield with a bucket from the spring, while the labourers are resting and the mules stand under the tree'. Such images will be taken *ad modum recipientis*, and possibly in despair if we are at present coughing under the sodium glare along the by-pass: the way back to Eden goes by way of Calvary, not the other way round, and the Calvaries now offered seem not of any picturesque kind. Perhaps Trappists live too sensibly, their

language growing naturally too healthy and arduous for our battered ears: perhaps the gulf is unbridgeable according to the flesh: perhaps there will have to be a reversion to simpler ways, a revolution after Fr McNabb's heart and Chesterton's, before large-scale communication becomes linguistically feasible, with only uncovenanted revelations and mercies meanwhile for those trapped and *incommunicado* inside the grey technolatries.

CHRISTOPHER DERRICK

ORIGEN AND THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, by Peter Nemeshegyi; Desclée.

Looking for the central intuition guiding Origen's theology, Fr Nemeshegyi thinks that he has found it in the concept of the divine fatherhood. A deep and extensive knowledge of Origen, as well as of his historians and commentators, allows him to develop and to illustrate this thesis with enthusiasm and conviction. We are, without any doubt, convinced of the importance that the divine fatherhood plays in the thought of Origen, above all by the role that the idea of the fatherhood of the author of all things plays in middle Platonism, where it is the expression of the metaphysical implications of the essential good and of the ways in which the first being is participated. Elsewhere Fr Nemeshegyi has no difficulty in showing that in making use of this philosophical doctrine, Origen corrects it and raises it as a result of what his Christian faith and the gospel teach him about the fatherhood of God. This said, one must make a few reservations about the role of 'key' that this concept is deemed to play in all understanding of the thought of Origen. The many pages in which Fr Nemeshegyi expounds, always with competence and ability, the various aspects of this thinking, never allow the idea of divine fatherhood to be lost, yet the connection between these repeated assertions and the work in which they are set is not always evident. Thus, in the doctrine of the *apocatastasis*, the divine fatherhood is brought in to explain the basis of the teaching; it is much less certain that it constitutes the premiss from which the body of the doctrine issues.

It would be unkind, however, to be too critical of Fr Nemeshegyi. He appears himself to concede in the preface that there is not, in an absolutely rigorous sense, any idea that can be the one and only 'key' to the system and be in his words 'the central idea around which all the rest of the doctrinal structure could arrange itself'. For the endeavour to be legitimate and fruitful, it is enough that the idea chosen as the centre of the study should be sufficiently essential to the system to bring under consideration major articulations of Origen's theology and the understanding of them. It seems to us beyond dispute that Fr Nemeshegyi has succeeded in this enterprise.

Ready to recognise that his chapter on the second person of the Trinity is well balanced and, on certain points, of very great interest, we wonder if the author has not minimised too much the subordinationism of Origen. It is