shows the power of love to conquer the selfishness of man's deep and instinctive urge to possess. This will always demand renunciation, even privation. But not destitution; for religious poverty witnesses not primarily to the sacrificial character of the redemption but to the coming of the kingdom, the reign of Christ. So it is creative, advancing the work of God in the world by the way in which it uses the various gifts God puts at man's disposal. Religious poverty calls for a detached use of property in the service of God. In this way it hopes to have a part in realizing on earth the society animated by charity which it is the Church's commission to create.

Given all this, it should be clear how far wide of the mark are recent suggestions that religious life should be modelled on the living conditions of the very poorest. This is to ask that we should identify ourselves with the jealous struggle between rich and poor, and so forgo our divine mission to show men how their society may be made whole. Perhaps the world no longer understands our testimony under the forms which it takes today. But apostolic poverty is a mystery, and it can only be understood by entering into its spirit, as we have to enter into the spirit of the cross. It cannot identify itself with the poverty which is the result of the failure of human society, for it is trying to do something quite different: it has to announce to the world the kingdom of heaven, the reign of love.

LIVING PARABLES

A Study of *Marriage and Celibacy* by Max Thurian. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

RONALD WALLS

MAX THURIAN is a member of a Protestant religious community, and his book *Marriage and Celibacy* is his second contribution to the series which the S.C.M. Press is publishing under the general title of *Studies in Ministry and Worship*. His first book in the series was entitled, *Confession*.

The greater part of the book now under review is concerned with celibacy, and it is clear that the author is by no means the kind of Protestant who assumes that because something is found in the Catholic Church it is therefore bound to be wrong or even wicked. On the contrary, we find that most of what he says about marriage and celibacy agree with Catholic doctrine. The apparently small divergence from Catholic doctrine is, however, most significant; it is like a wedge which with the greatest ease opens up a wide chasm between his whole manner of thought and that of a Catholic theologian.

I

The marriage vow, according to Thurian, is a life-long vow. He is unequivocal about this. Our Lord himself taught this and we have a plain record of our Lord's teaching in the scriptures. Discussion on the parenthesis, 'except it be for fornication', begins with a comment on Calvin's interpretation, which was that the innocent party, in a case of divorce because of adultery, was allowed to remarry. Thurian points out that either the marriage is annulled, when both parties must be free to remarry; or the marriage is not annulled by the misconduct of one partner.

Thurian shows that our Lord, in his reply to the Pharisees, intends to contrast his own teaching with that of both Hillel and of Shammai. Had he merely been siding with the stricter interpretation of Shammai, the disciples would not have responded: 'If the case stands so between man and wife, it is better not to marry at all'.

Thurian's interpretation sets the Matthaean version on the same level as that of Mark and Luke, who do not mention any condition at all. Thurian relies on the interpretation of P. Benoit who maintains that the *mē epi pornēia* refers to illegal unions which demand dissolution before a true marriage can take place.

Having arrived at the traditional Catholic view of the indissolubility of marriage, Thurian then permits the popular sentiment of Protestants to blur the clear definition of the foregoing argument. He grants that his argument is absolutely correct—in theory: but in practice it is different.

'It is true that, even if the problem of the indissolubility of marriage is settled in this way, there still remain the pastoral difficulties which crop up daily in this matter for the Church's

ministry. It could be dangerous to impose on a Church, on the plea of faithfulness to the Bible, a strict discipline that is as yet unfamiliar, for instance affirming the impossibility of remarriage after divorce. The Church gives its blessing too easily, and sometimes without due consideration, to marriages whose indissolubility is not sufficiently guaranteed by the faith of the partners. How can the Church then refuse remarriage to a divorced person who first married too thoughtlessly and then had to separate from his wife?'

Thurian is above all concerned to show how marriage under the new dispensation differs from marriage in the old. 'In the old Testament', he writes', the purpose of marriage was above all procreation, in order to add to the descendants of Abraham. . . . In the new testament marriage signifies above all the union of Christ and the Church, who now raise up the true descendants of Abraham . . .; in the Church the underlying meaning of marriage is still to be comprised in the sexual act, but for the purpose of the union of husband and wife, symbol of the union of Christ and the Church. Procreation, the necessary consequence of that act, has become spiritually secondary.'

His argument is that because 'spiritual sonship is no longer produced by human descent but by adoption of man in Christ', therefore, the primary end of marriage is not procreation. He varies the argument with equal absence of logic and says that marriage 'is no longer indispensable to the propagation of the people of God', for the simple reason—which we admit—that natural birth does not alone create a member of the kingdom of God. We are compelled to ask the very simple question: Have the children not first to be born before they can be baptized?

II

The greater part of the book deals with celibacy; naturally so, because this is the concept which is likely to be less familiar to his Protestant readers. This unfamiliarity, however, has not been caused by a complete neglect of the subject by eminent Protestant writers. Thurian introduces the topic by quoting from Calvin's commentary on I Cor. vii, 38.

'Now the point of the whole argument is this—celibacy is better than marriage because there is more freedom in celibacy, so that men can serve God more easily; yet no compulsion must

be imposed, so that it may be permissible to anyone to marry when he thinks fit. . . .'

In spite of later Reformed abhorrence of celibacy, we find, as Thurian shows, the Reformed theologian A. Vinet writing in 1942: 'St Paul, who claimed for all (I Tim. iv, 3) the right to marry, did not for that reason honour celibacy less. Not only did he recommend it as expedient during the dangerous times through which the Church was passing (I Cor. vii, 26-29), but also as a means of giving oneself more completely to God (I Cor. vii, 32, 35). In this he merely repeated the teaching of Jesus Christ himself (Matt. xix, 10-12). In the passages quoted neither St Paul nor his master before him had one particular order in the Church in mind; but surely a counsel of perfection must concern the clergy the most of all in the Church.'

To emphasize that he is not a solitary innovator, Thurian quotes Karl Barth also. 'In repudiating this way of celibacy, or allowing it only as an exception, would not one be falling back wrongly into a conception peculiar to the old testament?'

Taking his cue from eminent Reformed theologians of different periods, Thurian finally establishes the legality in the new testament dispensation of a state of permanent celibacy. He reminds us of the prophetic text, spoken to a people whose law commanded them to marry, and forbade any eunuch a place in the assembly, 'Unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off' (Is. lvi, 164-5). He shows that not only did our Lord indicate that some should follow a life of celibacy for the kingdom of God's sake, but by his use of the word 'eunuch' he indicated also that the state would be permanent. Following Karl Barth, Thurian stresses the fact that this state represents a taking by storm of the kingdom of God, a reaching out to the era when there shall be neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

III

There is an interesting and clearly argued section on the meaning of I Cor. vii, 36-38. The virgins referred to here have sometimes been thought of as daughters. Knox renders thus:

'the girl who is in his charge'. Thurian maintains that the problem being dealt with is that of spiritual betrothal, by which either a young man and woman lived together preserving virginity or else a young woman who desired to live a life of consecrated virginity was put under the protection of some reliable man, there being as yet in the Church no organized community life for such women. St Paul is therefore saying that this system is not very secure. He approves of women living in perpetual virginity, but in this circumstance, if natural affection is too strong, then they may marry the man under whose protection they are living. St Paul is in effect granting a dispensation from a legitimate vow because the circumstances in which it has to be kept are unsuitable. It follows from this interpretation (*a*) that celibate vows are in order in the Church, and (*b*) that St Paul is not saying that virginity in general is better than marriage. Although he warns us not to prove more than the text justifies, Thurian does just that, by using it to prove the contrary in (*b*).

The examination of I Corinthians vii is preceded in Thurian's book by a discussion of the attitude of the early Church to virginity. Thurian maintains that by reaction to the sexual licence with which it was surrounded, the Church exalted virginity and belittled marriage. It was this tendency, he states, which may have led to belief in the perpetual virginity of our Lady. He writes: '. . . although the gospels state categorically the virginity of Mary before the birth of Jesus, no biblical text allows us to make her perpetual virginity after the birth of Christ an essential dogma of the Christian faith'; and he claims that Calvin supports him. 'Without supporting Mary's perpetual virginity, Calvin thinks, therefore, that she had no other child than Jesus, her only son.' The statement of Calvin from which Thurian extracts this curious idea is this: 'When she heard that the Son of God was to be born, she realized at once what a unique act that would be; and that is why she excluded intercourse with a man. . . .' What, we may ask, is perpetual virginity, if not 'excluding intercourse with a man'?

Ironically, Thurian himself provides all the material for an argument in favour of our Lady's perpetual virginity. First he affirms that celibacy must be permanent; and he explains later that it is distinguished from marriage in that the celibate is able to dedicate his body as well as his soul directly to Christ. Towards the end of the book he points clearly to our Lady as the one who

most fully realized this ideal of complete self-dedication. She is the type of all dedicated virgins. 'The virginity of Mary when the incarnation took place shows this meaning of complete dependence on the Lord. Mary was a virgin in her motherhood of Christ not because there would have been anything unseemly for her in marriage, but in order to show that in giving the Saviour to the world she consecrated her body and her spirit to God alone in an act of perfect dependence.'

If her disposition was perfectly that of the dedicated virgin, then she of all virgins must have been one perpetually.

IV

Having firmly established that celibacy is a lawful and normal way of serving Christ, Thurian completes his study by expounding the particular qualities of this state. Again he quotes Calvin: 'Marriage is like a burden, which weighs down the faithful man's spirit so much that he cannot go cheerfully to God. . . . The married man is divided; for he is partly given to his wife, and does not belong completely to God.' There is, therefore, a practical advantage in celibacy for those who wish to serve God completely, and in particular for those who would serve him in the ministry.

This is not all: there is an interior advantage also. We should desire celibacy 'so that there may be nothing that prevents us from adhering to God, which is the only thing that should concern man in the whole of his life'. The words are again from Calvin. According to Thurian, the celibate stands in a special relationship to Christ's humanity. 'The unmarried woman seeks to be holy both in body and in spirit, which means, in biblical language, that she does not only consecrate her soul to God but that even her body is entirely reserved for the service of the Lord. . . . The celibate, in the whole of his human nature, body and soul, can be wholly and directly consecrated to Christ.' Celibacy is thus a most suitable condition for a contemplative.

Finally, 'Beyond the practical and interior meanings which we have described, the state of celibacy has a third meaning which is properly theological. Voluntary celibacy for the kingdom of heaven's sake is the sign of a new order where marriage is no longer, as in the old testament, a necessity for ensuring a holy posterity to Abraham.' He adds, however, that 'celibacy is not

alone in bearing this eschatological meaning, but it is a striking sign of the new order which detaches us from this passing world'.

But in spite of these great advantages, Thurian is at pains to uphold the common Protestant view that celibacy is in no sense a higher or more desirable state than marriage.

His argument seems to depend first upon the assumption that superiority must always be *moral* superiority. He affirms that 'the state of celibacy is not more favourable to salvation or to obedience in the Church's life'. This is perfectly true; each man must work out his salvation by fulfilling perfectly the duties of his particular state. The conclusion is unwarranted, however, that because celibacy is not morally higher, it is not higher as a state of being.

The key to the understanding of this is lost, not because of what Thurian has said about celibacy, but because of what he has said about marriage. Marriage has been taken out of the natural order altogether, and is said to be, in its essence, a symbol of Christ's union with his Church. It becomes a symbol of the new order—the order where there will be no marriage—just as much as the state of celibacy is. More than this, it is not the natural end of marriage, children, of whom our Lord said 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven', which is the material for the symbol, but the transitory union which begets them.

V

Thurian has throughout regarded marriage and celibacy as symbols, not as realities. Celibacy indeed reminds us all that in the kingdom of heaven there will be no marrying; but here and now the celibate enjoys something of the kingdom which the married person does not. Marriage is an analogy of the love of Christ for his Church; but at the same time and basically it is a reality of the natural order, and a man and wife serve God and sanctify their own souls by adhering to its nature.

The final critique of Thurian's work must take an account of what he thinks the purpose of the Church is, for marriage and celibacy are functions of the life of the Church in the world.

'Christian marriage and Christian celibacy are among the essential and complementary elements of the parable of the kingdom of God which the Church is called upon to act in this world. Every parable must have a dialectical character. The parable

itself is not the truth, but by its presentation, by the interplay of the dialectical elements which comprise it, the parable leads the way to the truth and places the soul in the presence of the Truth, which is Jesus Christ. The Church is not the kingdom of God, but by the elements which comprise it, by the ways of life, the vocations and the ministries which are performed in it, it leads men to aim at the kingdom of God which it proclaims.'

The most significant statement—and it is one which has controlled the whole development of the particular arguments about marriage and celibacy—is this: the Church is not the kingdom of God; it is the great actor of a parable, the bearer of an idea. Is this not the essence of gnosticism?

THE LETTER OF ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH TO THE ROMANS (continued)

The first half of this letter appeared last month. St Ignatius was martyred in the Roman arena about A.D. 110. *He was afraid that the Roman Church would bring influence to bear to secure him a reprieve, and on his journey there as a condemned prisoner he wrote them this letter.*

FROM Syria all the way to Rome I am having practice in taking on wild beasts; by land and sea, night and day, I am tied to ten leopards, that is to a squad of soldiers who only grow more brutal the more consideration they are given. But their ill-treatment helps to make me a better disciple. Not that I am thereby justified (I Cor. iv, 4). Oh, how I am looking forward to the beasts that have been arranged for me, and I pray they will make short work of me! Indeed, I will coax them to swallow me smartly, and not as they have done with some, cringing away from them and refusing to touch them; and if they do not do it willingly, I shall force them to it myself.

Please look at it my way; I know what is good for me. Now at last I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing, of things visible or invisible, grudge me my reaching Jesus Christ. Come fire