

## EXTRACTS

PROFESSOR Eugène Tesson, of the *Institut Catholique* of Paris, writes in the April *Etudes* of the tension which exists between the priest's necessary implication in the life of the world and the primary purpose of his priesthood. It is of course an application of the general tension for every Christian who has to be in the world but not of it, and which Père Daniélou in the March issue of the same review has discussed in terms of obedience to God and the Church and initiative in temporal society. Perhaps there is no snap answer to the problem, which has become so acute in regard to the priest-workers. But Professor Tesson can only suggest that the priest, while so often having to be engaged in 'profane' activities, may often lose sight of his originally high motives so that the Church has to keep a weather eye on the situation. 'C'est à l'Eglise d'y veiller.' Perhaps, however, if while not forgetting some need for envigilation we were to turn our attention to seeing that no activities in which Christians engage were in fact 'profane' we might approach nearer to a resolution of the intense difficulty.

In an article in the same issue of *Etudes* Père Holstein, S.J., who has recently been taken to task by *La Vie Spirituelle* for a too 'mystical' interpretation of religious obedience, seems to suggest this resolution, the sanctifying of the profane.

It would be to restrain the priestly office if we were to limit it to the simple administration of the sacraments and acts of worship. Since the Middle Ages theological language in making the word 'sacrament' more precise has reserved it for the seven sanctifying acts. . . . But if we are to give its fullness to the word which was used so generously by St Augustine to indicate the riches of the Christian mystery, where the visible and the human are the way of access to the invisible and of the transmission of grace, we could say that the priests are the ministers of this great and principal 'sacrament' of life which is the Church, the body of Christ.

Whether or not the priest-workers succeeded, it could be said that they were attempting in this way to make the work-bench and the quay-side sacramental and part of the visible reality which leads to the invisible life of God. And certainly the laity, who have always shared in the priesthood and in this task, must always be seeking the sacramental in their daily occupation. For the good Christian, all things are holy, all things are sacramental.

In the same context *Evangeliser* (Brussels, March-April) has resuscitated a paper by Bishop Goetstouwers on the asceticism characteristic of the priest. The priest as mediator must overcome himself so that his own personality does not stand in the way of the communication between God and the people. He must efface himself. 'Psychologically personality

wishes to assert self', but the priest must form his personality to 'impersonality'.

This 'becoming impersonal' does not mean the disappearance of his human personality but only its elevation, its purification, its sublimation by despoiling it of all self-love in order to make way for the priestly mission. This primacy of the priesthood does not imply a cold impersonality, but something warm and universally human which surpasses personality.

His lordship went on to apply this line of thought to the priest as God's ambassador in the Church and as teacher and pastor.

In the same issue of *Evangeliser* Père Mellet writes of the sanctification of the priest by means of the confessional, a means of perfection which is perhaps not always recognized.

The best confessor is not one who knows his Canon Law most exactly, but the one who is most profoundly and docilely given over to the hand of God, the supreme judge and the prime healer of souls. In the confessional the priest is not a robot distributing anonymous absolutions, nor is he a solemn magistrate who applies with a cold and conscientious indifference the dictates of the law. He is a judge who judges in order to pardon. . . .

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