

REVIEWS

LE SACERDOCE ROYAL DES FIDÈLES DANS LA TRADITION ANCIENNE ET MODERNE. By Paul Dabin, S.J. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

This is an important and timely work on a subject about which too little has been written, viz., the sense in which the laity share in the 'kingly priesthood' of 1 Peter, 2, 9. The author, who died at the age of 58 in 1949, has brought together the relevant passages from the Latin and Greek Fathers, from the great Scholastics, as well as from modern theologians and spiritual writers. The result is a comprehensive presentation of the sources of Catholic tradition which can form a basis for the as yet undeveloped theology of the priesthood of the laity. A section, *De Laicis*, is to be found in the Codex of Canon Law, but this is reduced to insignificance in the standard theological tractate *De membris Ecclesiae*. The Reformation polemic led to attention being directed to the role of the hierarchy, and to what distinguished the orthodox from the heretics, while the part played by the vast majority of Christians, the faithful laity, was insufficiently considered. There were perhaps some grounds for the Gallic witticism, 'Les simples fidèles n'ont que le rôle des moutons de la Chandeleur; on les bénit et on les tond'. Accordingly, Fr Dabin's very positive contribution to a '*laïcologie*' or a '*théologie du laïcat*' will be generally welcomed.

In the Introduction the author guards himself against any possible misunderstanding: he is careful to stress the fundamental distinction between the unique ministry of the ordained priesthood and the share in this to be assigned to all Christians. Nor does he fail to take notice of a certain '*arrogance laïque*' which at times makes appearance in the sphere of Catholic action. At every stage he is patently anxious to keep within the limits of the central Tradition; yet it is Catholic tradition itself which 'recognises in those who are baptised or confirmed a certain, not precisely specified, priestly, prophetic and royal office—a threefold quality not to be understood in an exclusively metaphorical sense'.

Fr Dabin's chief conclusions may here be set down. Apart from the simple metaphorical sense in which it is universally conceded to the faithful, their royal and prophetic priesthood may be defined in the following manner:

- (i) A functional participation, at once individual and collective, chiefly passive though partly active, in Christ's triple office of King, Priest and Prophet.
- (ii) This is inaugurated by baptismal incorporation of Christ as King, Priest and Prophet.
- (iii) It is perfected, in due course, by the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation.

(iv) It is closely related to the sacramental character impressed on the soul of the baptised and confirmed.

(v) It is externalised, as a speculative sign, by the post-baptismal rite of anointing with chrism and made manifest, as a practical sign, by the anointing with chrism at confirmation.

(vi) It empowers for the exercise of certain acts pertaining to the Church's official worship by an exclusive title—either with regard to the baptised in relation to the non-baptised, or to the confirmed in relation to the non-confirmed.

(vii) It creates, in correspondence with given rites and prerogatives, certain moral and religious obligations.

(viii) It in no way prejudices the incommunicable rights proper to the hierarchy in respect of order and jurisdiction.

These are some of the conclusions for which the author claims the unanimous support of both patristic tradition and the ancient Liturgies. The value of such a piece of research needs no further stressing.

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THE WAY OF DIVINE LOVE OR THE MESSAGE OF THE SACRED HEART TO THE WORLD. (Sands; 15s.)

For those who have no room for private revelations and to whom the writings of the mystics seem nonsense, this book will have no attractions. It may even be a scandal, a stumbling block, as apparently it already has been to some readers. But so was the folly of the Cross to those who were wise in their own conceits. And this purports to be a further and perhaps final appeal to the world from that same divine Lover of souls, who in the days of his mortality was branded as a madman by his own people.

Whether or not Sr Josefa Menendez, a Spanish laysister of the Society of the Sacred Heart who died in 1923, was yet another of those chosen souls through whom God speaks to those who have ears to hear, has so far not been decided by the Church. She believed, in all humility, that she was, and the testimony of her life convinced her superiors that she was not deceived.

Her message is a reiteration, verbal at times, of the appeals for reparation for sin and for a return of love for Love which were made through St Margaret Mary and resulted in the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart as we know it today. God, she declares, insists afresh that the heart of Christ, fountain of love and mercy, is the one hope of salvation and happiness for the anguished world. 'I am Mercy and Love and I must be sovereign King. . . . Help me to make my love for men known, for I am come to tell them that in vain will they seek happiness apart from me, for they will not find it.' To this is added a special appeal to 'consecrated souls', priests and religious (who are here reinstated in their traditional position as the élite of Christ's flock), to allow themselves to be used as victims and apostles of divine Love; to set others on fire