

over Britain and Europe and increasingly in North America.

Many men and women have in consequence come to make their own the *Testament* of Cardinal Mercier which Couturier was so fond of quoting :

'In order to unite with one another, we must love one another; in order to love one another, we must know one another; in order to know one another, we must go and meet one another.'

✠ *Oliver Bristol*

LES RELIGIEUSES DANS L'ÉGLISE ET DANS LE MONDE ACTUEL. Par Sœur Jeanne d'Arc, O.P.; Paris : Editions du Cerf.

With the winds of *aggiornamento* blowing steadily in the Church, it is not surprising that among women's religious orders there is a keen scent of renewal in the air. In fact, renewal in various forms had already been widely felt before Pope John even mentioned the summoning of a Council, now nearly six years ago, nor should the present movement towards modernization be unduly attributed to the influence of Cardinal Suenens' much-publicized *The Nun in the World*. Undoubtedly, before his book appeared, there were already stirrings towards reform, fostered by the growth of contacts and groupings of religious of different types – the Council of Major Religious Superiors, and the Association of Convent Schools, to mention only two among many. The good achieved by these contacts and countless others at courses, summer-schools, conferences and lectures shared by nuns of many Orders has been incalculable in breaking down barriers, building up a strong spirit of co-operation and fraternal charity, widening horizons and throwing open windows generally.

Other influences have filtered through from the continent where many Orders have connections of some kind, and there it is hard to overestimate the value of a series of publications on *Problems of Religious Life*, brought out by Les Editions du Cerf over the last ten years or so. One of the latest of these, *Les Religieuses dans l'Eglise et dans le Monde actuel*, by Sœur Jeanne d'Arc, O.P., is a contribution of major importance. The writer has the great advantage of knowing the situation from the inside and reveals herself as a woman of profound insight who tackles her subject with admirable understanding, courage and balance of view.

After an outline, clear and to the point, of the principles underlying the religious life, she gives a penetrating analysis of the present situation and discusses a variety of problems, especially those in which Orders founded to deal with past emergencies now find themselves. The picture is frank and undisguised, so refreshingly candid yet sensible and serenely supernatural that it manages to avoid that critical tone of disparagement sometimes met with in others who approach this subject with less experience and depth of vision. The problems dealt with in this section are basic general ones concerning the religious life itself and the place of religious Orders in the Church and the world of today; the author is not here directly concerned with the individual and her personal or psychological adaptation. Inevitably, it is above all the situation in France that she puts before us. Both historical background and present position as well as the problems to be faced are somewhat different in England and the United States. Convents in England are fewer and on the whole better distributed than they are in France.

Nevertheless, if all this part makes most absorbing reading whether applicable to the English scene or not, it is in the third and largest section that Sœur Jeanne d'Arc really gets into her stride. Instead of dwelling disproportionately on difficulties, inadequacies and a diagnosis of the case, she devotes very nearly two-thirds of her book to constructive suggestions carefully and thoroughly worked out on all levels. Her first concern is to develop the individual religious in every way, and great emphasis is laid on doctrinal formation. In this respect religious today, we are told in a footnote on p. 217, are in a position similar to that of

the clergy in the seventeenth-century – virtually untrained. The seriousness of the situation is now grasped, she goes on to say, and before long it will become the accepted thing for all nuns and sisters to have spent some years on theological studies. The footnotes are, as it happens, a delightful speciality of this book and should not be skipped. When the author has some unusually daring suggestion to make, she cunningly slips it into just such a place, as if whispering it into your ear privately. See, for example, p. 225: . . . 'Why not let young women religious and seminarians follow courses together in theology or sacred scripture?' Why not, indeed. Such a suggestion does in fact represent the spirit in which this courageous book is written, a spirit of maturity and freedom, an adult reluctance to be bound by conventions belonging to another age. We recognize a fearless appraisal of a situation, and an equally fearless and objective desire for *aggiornamento* and all that that must mean. Yet one sees no trace of resentment, anticlericalism or disregard for canon law. The author is herself far too realistic, soundly supernatural in outlook and ready to see the other point of view. She frankly admits that certain of her suggestions are too demanding and unlikely to be acceptable, but they are worth making: it is only by repeating such suggestions that the penny will drop in the end. There is, for instance, the idea that different religious Orders might pool their financial resources so that the richer among them might help to support the poorer. This, she adds, would be a relief to those sisters who feel uneasy at being paid for what they really do only for the love of God. I wonder how often this uneasiness is met with in fact: most sisters are only too glad to know that their work is bringing in something to support the community, while this in no way interferes with the supernatural quality of their motives.

One point that is studied with a detailed insistence which we might find surprising is the question of separating the office of superior from that of headmistress or sister-in-charge (of a hospital or home). To judge from the treatment given to this question, it sounds as though the

placing of these offices in the hands of two different individuals were something of an innovation in France. Over here it is a long-established situation in all but the smallest communities. But this is only a small point compared with the massive weight of wise comment and policy developed in the book. On the whole we undoubtedly still have much to learn, and far though we may think we have travelled along the road of fraternal co-operation between religious Orders and Congregations, a wide field remains to be explored. I heard recently of a fine joint venture now being launched in Dijon: a school in which Primary, Grammar and Technical sections are in the hands of three different Orders working in collaboration: Sisters of Providence, Sisters of Charity, and Canonesses of St Augustine. The recently founded Christ's College in Liverpool, for the training of teachers, is a forward-looking experiment somewhat along these lines, in which the Ursulines and secular clergy are working as a team, and one hopes that this will be fully successful and lead to many other developments of the kind.

Sœur Jeanne d'Arc does not, however, confine her bold suggestions to footnotes but devotes whole chapters to matters such as holidays for nuns and individual freedom of expression. Superiors will find that certain of her suggestions are excellent in theory but difficult to apply because some 'subjects' are insufficiently mature or are too solidly set in their ways to be able to adapt themselves or acquire a new outlook. The writer of this book is keenly aware of the problem and of the need for *time* in which ideas can slowly seep in.

It is this approach which is so reassuring. Sœur Jeanne d'Arc never forgets that, if a genuine renewal is to be achieved by religious Orders, it must grow organically from within; the ground must be prepared. Lasting and thorough renewal is not imposed from above by enlightened superiors on a flock of docile subjects. This deep respect for the human person is conspicuous throughout the book. If certain issues – obedience and authority, for instance – seem not to have been treated in depth, it must be remembered that this

work is but one of a whole series dealing with many aspects of religious life and that these questions were studied in earlier volumes, most of them translated into English, as, we may surely hope, this work will be.

This is unquestionably a book that is more than

interesting; it is of capital importance. Revolutionary? For some, yes; for others, just encouraging. It should not be missed by any nuns or sisters in a position of authority.

*M. Emmanuel, C.R.A.*

THE QUESTIONING CHURCH by Julius Cardinal Doepfner; *Burns and Oates, 7s 6d.*

PRIEST AND LAYMAN by Albert Dondeyne; *Sheed and Ward, 8s 6d.*

MISSION AND GRACE, Vol II, by Karl Rahner, S.J.; *Sheed and Ward, 11s 6d.*

Many people are frightened. It is not simply that, within the Church, new and surprising things are being said and done; it is rather that, for many people, the whole Church seems to have disappeared. We still have a Pope, it is true, and mass is still celebrated (after a fashion); but the whole of the old 'thing', as they have always known it, seems to be rapidly crumbling away. If the urgent need in the Church a few years back was for prophets to wake her from her torpor (and such voices are still necessary in many places), perhaps there is an equal need today for a new 'Book of Consolation', a need to help people, gently, to see that the 'new theology' is calling us to a deeper understanding of the old Church. The six essays that make up Cardinal Doepfner's book would be an important contribution to this programme of reassurance, whoever had written them. But, coming as they do from one of the most influential men in the Church today, they have a particular significance. Clear, incisive and balanced, they reveal the mind of a man who is not so much a theologian as a leader – and a shepherd. The most satisfactory essay is the second one: 'Reform – an essential element in the Church', while the title-essay is a little disappointing (one would like to know the date of its original delivery: the date given, 8 December, 1964, is a little unlikely in view of the fact that the English translation was available in September 1964).

One distinctive element in the 'new theology' is a fresh insistence on the dignity of the layman and a deeper grasp of his essential role in the building-up of the Church. Any attempt to 're-

valuate' the layman, however, that is not at the same time an attempt to understand the *whole* structure of the Church is in danger of producing an imbalance that is itself a form of clericalism. As the Revd Charles Davis has said '... the discussion about the laity has got into a tangle by an over-emphasis on the distinction between the clergy (or religious) and the laity. It has fallen into an inverted clericalism, unconsciously assuming the dichotomy of the past but now looking at it from the layman's side' (*America*, 110, 1964, p. 91). The layman's role can only be grasped in the light of a prior understanding of the *Christian* vocation common to both priest and layman and this, in turn, must result in a deeper understanding of the priesthood. As Canon Dondeyne says in this outstanding little book, '... the remarkable reappraisal of the role of the lay apostolate has not been accompanied by a parallel reappraisal of the office of the priesthood. And this is of the greatest importance indeed for the building up of the Church' (p. 28). The ordering of the material in this book is almost as important as the content of the individual chapters. First, Canon Dondeyne discusses the 'Building up of the Church' in general, giving a thumbnail sketch of that deepened vision of the People of God which has found expression in the Council's Constitution *De Ecclesia*. Then he has a chapter on 'The Priest' and, finally, a long chapter on 'The Layman in the Church'. There is more in this book than would seem possible in so few pages, but at times this may produce difficulties of digestion in somebody unfamiliar with the theology that underlies