

## BOOK REVIEWS

CELIBACY: THE NECESSARY OPTION ed. by George H. Frein. New York: Herder & Herder, 1968. pp. 174 \$4.95.

The question of celibacy has always stood out as a problem treated almost always at poles apart by its protagonists. The Holy Father stood pat on its exclusion from the Council hall's public debate, while avant-garde clergy particularly from the United States and Holland started a veritable hornet's nest when they stirred public opinion with surveys and symposia intendedly in order to create insinuations for the forthcoming decision on the matter by the Successor of Peter.

One such symposium was conducted on a grand national scale in the United States and which crystallized into this present book. Started even before the issuance of the *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* on July 23, 1957, its organizers braved the almost total boycott by the U.S. Bishops Conference. The book nonetheless gives all indications of a heroic stand and remarkable preparations centripetalizing toward an optional celibacy.

Optional celibacy is the most vital key to renewal. With this attitude duly sanctioned by Rome, "honorably" faced by the people, problems such as vocation crisis, human fulfillment and sterile apostolate face a more challenging future. The ancient apostolate faces a more challenging future. The ancient apostolic Church signaled a tremendous success in the evangelization without altogether imposing celibacy. Today, the Eastern Rite continue this tradition. The Anglican experience on this matter, supposedly the church most akin to Catholicism finds no sizeable objection to a married clergy. The Fathers and the Scriptures are never categorical on this matter. Proper distinction of priesthood from celibacy should be scrupulously observed since they are never co-extensive. Seminary training in particular does not provide the proper "decisional" atmosphere favorable to a "choice". It should not surprise us therefore if they make their own choice as soon as they find themselves on their own.

All in all, the arguments boil down to this: what has evolved as a growth, as a development, should never be imposed as a necessity. What is by nature optional should not be practised or imposed otherwise, if we must preserve the human dignity and freedom of the individual, promote ecumenism and bridge the disconcerting ministerial gap plaguing the Church today.

The above issues are practically the same ones which the encyclical had squared with and would have smothered completely had its dissenters considered the issue in another light other than what they wish to be enlightened with. That their arguments bring the assertions of *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* to a greater and a more defined relief, we are very grateful to this book.

● Norberto Castillo, O.P.

CHRISTIANS ACTIVE IN THE WORLD, by Yves Congar, O.P., trans. by P.J. Hepburne-Scott, Herder, New York: 1965. 227 pp.

That Fr. Congar is one of those theologians who have delved far deeper into and clarified better the decrees and constitutions of the II Vatican Council, especially those which treat on the nature of the Church and the role of the clergy and the laity in the salvific mission of Christ, is beyond doubt. In this book, *Christians Active in the World*, a companion volume to his *The Gospel Priesthood*. Fr. Congar once again proves himself a master of ecclesiology. Here he presents and discusses in a clear-cut and orderly manner two important subjects treated exhaustively by the Council, namely, the nature of the Church and the part of the layman in the life of the Church. He specifically answers the question. "What exactly is the role of the layman in the organization of the Church?" He says for instance:

The layman is the man who works for the kingdom of God, but not at the expense of his earthly engagement. He has to serve God, not by setting himself above or apart from marriage and the profession and the work. He does not take the short-cut taken by the priest or the religious who are dedicated solely to the kingdom of God. He follows the road which is longer and difficult, but it is his own, his vocation.

The layman, therefore, while being an integral and indispensable part of the Church without whom the Church is neither complete nor fully realized, has a role which he alone can play, just as the priest has a part which he alone can do.

To the many problems that confront the contemporary Christian like the problems of competence between society and Christian faith, of co-existence with peoples of different mentalities, faith or beliefs and such complicated and prevalent social phenomena as racial prejudice and interracial marriages, Fr. Congar likewise provides in this book guidelines and solutions. These guidelines and solutions are all the more clear and convincing from the meth-

od of approach which he employs equaled with the continual references to Sacred Scriptures and Tradition, the doctrine of the early Church Fathers, and general history.

This book, therefore, is enlightening and informative not only to laymen about whom the book mainly expends itself but also to priests and students to the priesthood, especially to those taking up ecclesiology. It has all the reasons to be so, since Fr. Congar was the spirit if not the author, behind the drafting of Vatican II's Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. This fact is further shown when one considers that although the contents of this book were taken from his lectures and speeches written and delivered in 1960, they nevertheless strike a conciliar or post-conciliar note. Consequently, *Christians Active in the World* can be said to be possessed of a sine-qua-non importance, so much so that it would be a shame if every professor of ecclesiology would not get to read and ponder it, just as *American* says: "it would be a shame if every priest did not get to read and ponder Congar's latest volume (*The Gospel Priesthood*)."

● Jose Parohinog

THOMAS AQUINATIS VITAE FONTES PRAECIPUAE, compiled by Fr. Angelico Ferrua, O.P. Alba: Edizione Domenicana, 1968. Pp. 412. L. 2.500

This book purports to commemorate three Dominican milestones: the Order's 150th anniversary, (22 Dec. 1215), the fourth centenary of the St. Thomas as the Doctor of the Church by Pius V, and the first anniversary of the death of Fr. Ceslao Pera, a devoted follower of St. Thomas, and the one who was instrumental in the inception of this book.

The book contains the main sources of the life of St. Thomas: "Historia beati Thomae Aquinatis" by William of Tocco, "Legenda sancti Thomae Aquinatis" by Bernard Gui, the Profess of Canonization, the famous "Historia Ecclesiastica" of Ptolemy of Lucca, the well-known "Vitae Fratrum" of Gerald Fracher, and the "Bonum universale de apibus" by Thomas of Capimpre. A very helpful and well detailed index of names, and works can be found at the end of the book.

Students of the Angelic Doctor will find it hard to find in one volume both the legendary and historical facts about the saint. For this reason, no library should fail to acquire this book.

● L. Z. Legaspi, O.P.