

no power to absolve. In this too, I have endeavoured to seek peace and pursue it, and now it seems to me a blessing if others can speak to me of their faults as faults. Not with boastfulness: 'I didn't declare them, of course, I had them in my wash bag.' Not with contention like the child in school who says to the teacher, 'My mother said I could', but with at least implicit sorrow and desire to avoid the fault in future.

And so I finish with words from St Paul. First, in Romans:

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom. 12. 6-8).

And now I repeat the words from 2 Corinthians with which I began: 'For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God' and I add what follows: 'So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day' (2 Cor. 4. 15-16).

## Reviews

**THE MASTER CALLS: A HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN LIVING**, by Fritz Tillmann, translated by Gregory Roettger, O.S.B.; Burns and Oates, 42s.

This book is unusual among works of moral theology. It contains no reference to the Code of canon law, and over a thousand references to the New Testament. It is directed to the layman and makes a genuine endeavour to avoid seminary jargon. It can truly claim to be concerned with Christian living without being preoccupied with ecclesiastical discipline. It is not, however, as its subtitle suggests, a handbook which one could turn up to settle a particular moral perplexity. This is not to its discredit: for there cannot be a handbook to God's law as there can be a handbook to canon law. A moral theologian must be more than a canon lawyer: but he cannot be a divine lawyer.

The structure of this book is firmly scriptural. This is made clear by the first section entitled *Principles*. It takes as its fundamental notion the idea of the following of Christ, and relates this to other key gospel concepts such as the

love of neighbour, the new creation, the gift of the Holy Ghost and the contrast between letter and spirit. The following of Christ is presented as a journey from conversion to perfection by humility and self-denial under the impulsion of the grace of God our Father and Judge. Each idea which is treated is illustrated by a rich anthology of biblical texts.

The main body of the work is more conventional in pattern. Parts Two, Three and Four deal respectively with the *Love of God*, the *Love of Self*, and the *Love of Neighbour*. Part Two treats of the virtues of faith, hope, charity and religion, and of prayer and sacrifice. Part Three deals with the respect due to the body and sex, of the virtue of temperance, and of the sacraments. Part Four deals with obligations of charity and justice towards others' rights of property and reputation. A final section, entitled *Social Relations*, contains one chapter on *Christian Marriage* and another on *Church and State*.

Within each chapter, the scriptural emphasis is maintained. The section on respect for the body, for instance, contains a discussion of the contrast between flesh and spirit in St Paul (p. 187 f.); the chapter on chastity commences with a consideration of our Lord's attitude to women (p. 209 f.); the treatment of prayer is based on the gospel accounts of the prayer of Christ (p. 151 ff.). The biblical texts quoted and cited in each section make up a catena which would serve as a helpful basis for mental prayer.

Much of traditional moral theology is soundly presented in the appropriate chapters, and frequently painstaking efforts are made to link Catholic ethics with their evangelical basis (e.g. p. 173 ff. on oaths). As a work of theology, however, the book cannot be altogether praised. The general plan is excellent; its carrying out in detail is sometimes disappointing. The use of scripture is more copious than scholarly, the analysis of ethical concepts is sometimes shallow, the moral conclusions drawn are often open to question. The author writes almost as a preacher who knows that he will not be interrupted or quoted *verbatim*, rather than as a scholar who must justify each statement, or as a lecturer who must be prepared for question and counter example from his students.

Any moral theologian must engage in conceptual analysis of moral notions and in the exposition of Christian moral principles from scripture and tradition; he must be ready to put forward rational argument and factual evidence to support particular conclusions drawn from natural and revealed principles. All these activities have an essential place in moral theology: but they are activities of different kinds and must be kept distinct. In *The Master Calls* they are often confused with each other, so that one is left uncertain on what grounds the author is proffering his conclusions. Truths of logic are introduced with the rubric 'Experience teaches . . .' (e.g. p. 187) and conceptual equivalences are offered as practical advice (e.g. p. 227 on vocation). Analysis of the interrelation of virtue-words is made to seem like a description of the elements of some spiritual chemistry (e.g. pp. 91, 112). Matters of faith are described as matters of experience (e.g. p. 115) and factual generalizations are made on little evidence (e.g. p. 205 on suicide; p. 206 on cremation; p. 221 on masturbation.) It is often

difficult to decide whether a particular statement is meant to be factual, logical, or moral. 'Times may be troubled' we are told on p. 116 'and the Cross may cast its shadow over the path of the Christian, but in him resides unperturbed a holy and profound joy.' Is this a fact about baptized persons, or is it part of the definition of a true Christian, or is it a statement about how we ought to behave?

*The Master Calls* is not easy to read: the style is often clumsy and turgid. This is partly because the book is a translation from the German, partly because despite the author's efforts scholastic argot sometimes obtrudes. Some of the linguistic analyses do not survive the transformation from one language into another: not all that is said in the chapter on piety and reverence is true of the English words 'piety' and 'reverence', though it may be true of their nearest German equivalents. Difficulties of this sort seem to make it doubtful whether it is worth while to translate any but the very greatest works of such analysis from one language into another. The translator's problems are brought home quaintly when we are told that there are proverbs running 'an idle mind is the devil's workshop' and 'calumniate heartily, something always sticks'. The language used about sex, as so often in books of moral theology, sends shivers down the spine. (See, for example, the passage on p. 220 beginning 'On the way to the completed act are impure looks, touches, embraces and kisses. By their very nature they beget the tendency to go to the limit . . .').

The weakest parts of the book are those which concern public morality. The Kingdom of God does not receive the full treatment accorded to other gospel concepts. The page devoted to Communism is pitifully inadequate (p. 307). Many moral principles enunciated seem to be misleading. It will not do, for instance, to say simply that 'destructive bombing can be approved of, from the moral standpoint, only if it appears effectual in hastening the end of hostilities'. (p. 340).

It is a pity that these defects should mar a book which at first sight promised extremely well.

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REQUIEM FOR A PARISH, by John Foster; Newman Press, \$3.00.

I must begin what would otherwise be a totally adulatory review with a double warning: first, do not be put off by the title of this book; it is not just one more depressing assessment of why parish life is moribund: and second, do not be discouraged by the rather breathless and sometimes unclear style (a second reading is well worth the effort, and actually turns out not to be an effort at all).

The mission of the parish is to form man in his wholeness. The art of the priesthood exercised in the parish through the duality of clergy and laity is a work of reconciliation, of 'at-one-ment'. This work of reconciliation is not exhausted when the parish reconciles the individual soul to God through the ministry of the sacraments and of the Word. It has also the task of