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The Missionary Task: The Church as Mission

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to transform it." As project, religion is myth and, as such, will be abandoned with the progress of science. Yet its vision of charity, and suffering is beautiful. This is why Maurice Thorez says, "we can neither despise nor criticise the Christian for his faith, his love, his dreams, his hopes. Our own task is to labor and to struggle lest they remain distorted and illusory." In other words the Communist task as conceived by Thorez is to help the Christian find a beginning of his heaven here on earth.

For the Marxist, Garaudy informs us there are no dogmatic answers to such questions as the meaning of life, of death, of one's origin and end. All answers to such questions are bound up with a certain stage of knowledge which always bears the stigma of "the transitory inadequacies of the age and can never be offered as definitive. Though the Marxist asks the same questions as the Christian does, he feels no compulsion to provide an answer or to affirm behind the activity a being who is its source. For the Marxist freedom is man's creation, not a matter of grace and assent."

Perhaps the issue between the Christian and Marxist is most clearly stated in the words of Garaudy himself "Christianity teaches us to understand everything on the basis of what is in process of arrival." For the Marxist, "nothing is promised, nothing is waiting" and to tell man that there is something beyond is to impoverish him.

Garaudy recognizes the fact that Marxism like Christianity can be embarrassed by concrete historical embodiments of its basic vision. To concentrate on these embodiments, however, will not advance dialogue too far. Dialogue, if it is to be fruitful, must be based on a genuine respect for the sources of both Christian and Marxian thought. Garaudy's book is a significant contribution to a better understanding between Marxism and Christianity. Continuing dialogue will undoubtedly be slow in developing. In some areas of the world, it may never come at all. But at least Professor Garaudy's work holds out hope for cooperation and understanding between two world views which between them affect the destinies of two-thirds of mankind.

JOHN DOHERTY, S.J.

THE MISSIONARY TASK

THE CHURCH AS MISSION. By Eugene Hillman, C.S.Sp. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. 144 pp.

Father Hillman is an American missionary in Tanzania, Africa. He was the first priest ever to be sent to the nomadic tribes of North-

ern Tanzania. In writing about the missionary aspect of the Church he knows what he is writing about, both by experience and study.

It is a pleasure to read this book. It has missionary élan; the approach is frequently deeply biblical; it is pervaded by eschatological urgency, and it knows how to use modern categories of thought. A very good book.

The author develops several penetrating views on the missionary character of the Church. Its main thesis, I would say, is that the Church must be planted everywhere, as a sign of salvation for all nations. This is shown to be the purpose of the missionary task in the strict sense of the word.

Consequently, the purpose of the missions is not primarily quantitative, in the sense that the missionaries would have to convert first all members of a particular community before moving on to the next. They should rather, like St. Paul, organize the Church at a particular place, and then move on to the next. "till the Lord comes." Another consequence is that countries where the Church has been solidly planted should not keep all their priests for the pastoral work. The missionary function is so important that the hierarchy in these countries must send a part of their clergy to the nations where the Church has not yet been planted.

Priority in action must be given to the work of establishing the visible Church through "calling out" a nucleus of chosen disciples from among all peoples who have not yet been evangelized. The Church is the new people of God, called out visibly from among the different ethnic-culture units of men and standing symbolically for all men of every nation. These local churches are the sign of God's universally salvific will, which is at work in all men; they symbolize the unity in Christ toward which all are called. Of course the Church is also interested in increasing the number of the flock, but this belongs to the pastoral functions of the Church.

Notwithstanding the richness and high quality of the book, there are some points to be criticized:

1. The notion of *mission* of the Church has received lately a wider meaning; this is explained in the first chapter. 'Mission' no longer refers exclusively to the task of evangelizing the nations who do not yet know Christ, but it practically includes all apostolic functions, including the apostolate of winning back the de-christianized masses in Europe and in the Americas. Though the author is right in distinguishing the pastoral function and the missionary function (this distinction was later accepted also by the decree on the missions), and though he is right too in his concern about the decreasing numbers of mission-

ary vocations in the strict sense of the word, he is waging a useless and lost battle when he tries to preserve the word mission exclusively for the foreign missions. It has become common parlance to say that the Church has only one mission: to continue the mission of Christ, certainly now that the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity itself uses the word 'mission' in the first six numbers in the wide sense. To denote the missionary activity in the strict sense it uses the word 'missions' in the plural.

2. The author beautifully explains how the unique Christ-event affects all men of all times, so that all can be saved by Him. But when he stresses that "the real possibility of accepting grace is the same for all" (p. 78 and passim), it does not appear that belonging to the Church in an explicit and conscious way is a grace. The author is well acquainted with the ideas of Karl Rahner (who wrote the Foreword of this book and whom the author has consulted), but on this point he goes further than Karl Rahner. This is one of the sensitive areas in modern missiology. Theologians like de Lubac and Rahner are more careful here; they do not conclude that the concrete possibility of being saved is 'the same' for the 'anonymous christians' and the explicit christians. The author affirms 'the same possibility for all' several times and stresses it, but he does not prove it. Should we not rather say that the explicit knowledge of Christ and the reception of the sacraments are a grace? The Church is an efficacious sign, instrument and sign; she offers a fulness of means.

3. As a consequence of the preceding view ("The same possibility for all"), the necessity of the Church does not seem to come out sufficiently. We may summarize the author's reasoning thus: Christ has redeemed us all. Consequently the Holy Spirit works in all men, to save them. The Church makes it known to them that they are being saved by Christ. Though this reasoning seems true to me in what it affirms, it does not manifest sufficiently the saving activity of the Church herself. Christ saves us *through* the Church. It is mentioned in the book that the Church is an efficacious sign, and the author is far from denying the salvific work of the Church, but several times the connection between the sacramentum and the res sacramenti (faith and grace) is not sufficiently clear. We get the impression sometimes that the only difference between explicit and anonymous christians consists in this that the explicit christians know by whom they are being saved, whereas the anonymous christians do not.

These reservations being made, I recommend the reading of this book; it is very informative and stimulating, and Cardinal Cushing himself praises it in the Preface.