

# philippine studies

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## **Faith, Church and Life: Our Way to God**

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his volume: seven selections are from the pen of Felix Frankfurter, while William J. Brennan comes in a poor second with four.

The writings are, with a few exceptions, out of court commentaries by the justices on the work of the Supreme Court. One exception is the charge from the bench of Samuel Chase in 1803 which led to the attempt of President Thomas Jefferson to oust him through impeachment. Equally interesting to the historically minded is John Marshall's anonymous defense of his landmark verdict on *McCullough vs. Maryland*, reprinted, so the editor assures us, for the first time since 1819. There is a group of memorial addresses: Story on Marshall, Curtis on Taney, Frankfurter on Holmes, Jackson on Brandeis. These are, without exception, *nil nisi bonum*; but then the speakers obviously were hearing at their backs the winged chariot hurrying near.

The most interesting section of the book, and by far the largest, is devoted to the contemporary Supreme Court. A reading of these passages will not only educate the uninitiate in the mechanics of the Court's operations, but it will reveal the attitudes of the present justices towards their office, the philosophy behind their decisions, and the constitutional questions they deem of major moment at the present time. Douglas on *Stare decisis*, Brennan on the Bill of Rights and the states, and Jackson on the Supreme Court as a political institution are but three of a thoughtful group of essays.

While the book will not satisfy those who like autobiographies, it might appeal to the mystery fans. Where is the selected bibliography? In his introductory chapter the editor constantly urges his readers to consult it. If one dutifully turns to the end of the book, he will find no bibliography (nor index, for that matter). Where is the passage from the pen of Justice Samuel Nelson which is promised on page 18? Diligence will uncover the bibliography, but this reviewer could not unearth Nelson. Where will the editor next put the notes? He caters to all tastes; he places them in the text, or at the bottom of the page, or grouped at the end of the selection. And the greatest mystery: why did the editor publish this book? There is no apparent end served by the volume and the selections are tied together by a very weak string. Nevertheless to those interested in legal history the book will repay reading.

FRANCIS X. CURRAN

## FAITH, CHURCH AND LIFE

OUR WAY TO GOD. A Book of Religious Self-Education. By Franz Michel Willam. Ronald Walls, tr. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964. xv, 400 pp.

This translation of Father Willam's *Unser Weg Zu Gott* aims at the religious self-education of mature people. Its central theme is the Christian message: *Christ is the great gift of the Father's love for us; Christ is also our leader in the journey home to the Father.* To unfold the message of God's love, the "kerygma", the author has drawn almost exclusively on the living sources of Christian faith, the Bible and the liturgy; to inspire personal commitment, he has presented timely thoughts for individual and social life as well as practical conclusions for intelligent and active participation in the liturgy. The author is uniformly methodical in his approach; first he gives the doctrinal element and then he draws the consequent practical application. He proves that the loving and earnest encounter with the living Word of God is basic towards the cultivation of Christian maturity and responsibility. The fundamental truths of Christianity are shown to revolve around the "Mystery of Christ", the focal point of God's redemptive plan for man.

With the sure bold strokes of a master, Father Willam divides his work into three parts:

**Part I. THE MESSAGE OF THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN.**

**Part II. THE NEW COVENANT ESTABLISHED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST WITHIN THE CHURCH.**

**Part III. THE EXALTATION OF NATURAL LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY OF GRACE.**

Part I is centered on what God does out of love for man. Faith consists in the acceptance of that message which God in His love reveals to men in the Old and New Testaments. In this part, the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed are examined in twenty-eight sections, each section followed by challenging applications for the individual in his private life as well as in his role as a living cell of the Mystical Body.

Part II shows how man shares in the divine life through the grace of Jesus Christ. Under the influence of divine guidance, man must come gradually to a deeper understanding of that which was lost in paradise and which is to be regained by redemption in Jesus Christ. The vision of God can only be gained after a spiritual change and the exaltation of man through sanctifying grace, the participation in the divine life. Prayer, the sacraments, and the Holy Eucharist are treated in twenty-eight sections each followed by conclusions for Christian life.

Part III is directly concerned with the doctrine of the twofold way. It begins by pointing out that conscience, the God-given voice of reason which enables man to distinguish between good and evil, is the foundation of religious life. It goes on to explain that because through conscience man comes by nature into personal relationship with God,

the history of revelation turns out in the end to be a history of conscience. The worldly are content with setting right the surface of things; religious men aim at regenerating the very depths of the heart. To be a Christian means to let God enter into every aspect of our life. Part III follows the same logical treatment as Parts I and II. Thirty-three sections are devoted to the study of the commandments, the duties of one's station in life, and the fulfillment of the one supreme commandment to love God and our neighbor.

A sample of Father Willam's work will throw some light on his style and method. The following passage is found on page 196 in the discussion of self-discipline as an indispensable preparation for marriage:

He who wishes to marry must have learned self-mastery. If you want to judge whether you have learned this or not, ask yourself these questions:

Can you bury, and leave buried, the past-not merely your own?

Can you forgive?

Can you bear misfortune with equanimity?

Can you remain serene and good-natured when there is much to do?

Can you keep your temper even under provocation?

Can you refrain from having the last word?

Are you patient with children?

Can you bear ingratitude?

Father Willam's presentation is characterized by ease of style and simplicity of language. He describes clearly the relationship between the truths of faith and life. He allows the doctrinal facts to unfold themselves and lets God Himself speak to us through the Scriptures. He presents the whole Catholic life as a coherent unity. His explanations are interwoven with well-chosen excerpts from the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and contemporary life. All throughout this work, the Gospels are seen not simply as an object of study but as the foundation of Christian faith and activity. This book provides one with a more compelling conviction that it requires faith and the power of love for man to be like a light which always shines and sheds warmth.

SISTER BELLARMINA ROMUÁLDEZ, S.S.P.S.