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The Warrior Saint **by R. V. C. Bodley**

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If "Catholic living takes the pattern that it does" from Catholic doctrine, greater care may justly be demanded in the expression of that doctrine. Had Mr. Maynard attempted less, or more assiduously cultivated the books, "some of the most recent and best by laymen," whose primary purpose is to present Catholic doctrine, and had he likewise given to his individual chapters the limpidity and order of his table of contents, he would have described the Catholic way of life more usefully for his readers and more creditably to his literary and his Catholic self.

My Way of Life is quite another work. Here the average layman need fear no doctrinal errors, no confusions, and this not only because the author is St. Thomas Aquinas but also because his translators and paraphrasers, Frs. Farrell and Healy, have portrayed his thought with an accuracy and a clarity equal to those of the great Doctor himself. The *Summa Simplified for Everyone* is a terse, forceful and vivid "representation" of a supernatural theology and a rational philosophy of life, possessing the admirable quality of satisfying heart and mind. The publishers have given it a format slightly larger but just as attractive as that of their editions of the Sunday Missal. Evidence of the public's appreciation is the volume of sales—second largest in the Catholic bookstores of the United States, according to *America's Booklog* for June.

Carl J. Moell's edition of *The Sacred Heart Encyclicals* will be a useful instrument for Colombiere Circles, study clubs and other groups desiring authoritative explanations of the Sacred Heart devotion in handy form. Besides Leo XIII's *Annum Sanctum* (on Consecration) and Pius XI's *Quas Primas* (on the Kingship of Christ), *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (on Reparation) and *Caritate Christi Compulsi* (on Prayer and Expiation in the present distress of the Human Race), there is also a four-page excerpt, unmentioned in the pamphlet's title, from Pius XII's *Summi Pontificatus* (on the Unity of the Human Race).

RALPH B. GEHRING

THE WARRIOR SAINT. By R. V. C. Bodley. Little, Brown and Company, Boston. 1953. Pp. 302. \$4.00.

This is not another book on St. Ignatius Loyola. The subject of the biography is Charles de Foucauld, "viscount, libertine, hussar, explorer, Trappist monk, hermit in Palestine and missionary in the Sahara." His life (1858-1916) was extraordinary in many ways. In his youth and early manhood he was extraordinarily lazy, gluttonous, vain, petulant, purposeless, irreligious. Deprived of his commission in the French Cavalry on the occasion of a notorious affair with a prostitute, he began at last to show signs of maturity. Later readmitted to the army when trouble broke out in North Africa, he

distinguished himself as a cavalry officer. Then, disguised as a Jewish rabbi, he undertook a journey of reconnaissance in Morocco. After a year of incredible hardships, humiliations and perils he presented a report of his explorations which, because of its scientific accuracy and the vast extent of its information, was made compulsory reading for military men and Colonial officials in North Africa. Upon his return to France his reconversion to the Catholic Faith occurred with startling abruptness. Shortly after his conversion he was admitted to a Trappist monastery as a novice. Finding the Trappist Rule not severe enough to satisfy his desire for penance and self-abnegation, he went to Nazareth where he lived as the hermit-gardener of a monastery of the Poor Clares, astounding the Sisters by his extreme asceticism and filling them with admiration for his holiness. He later returned to Europe and took up studies for the priesthood. After his ordination, Pere de Foucauld went again to North Africa and began his missionary work in the Sahara Desert. At times interrupting his lonely and heroic life among the Moslem tribesmen to serve as chaplain with the Foreign Legion and other French African units, he spent the remaining fifteen years of his life in the Desert. During World War I he was killed by Moslem raiders who had been incited to rebellion against French rule.

The present biographer of Charles de Foucauld has himself had an interesting career. R. V. C. Bodley, an English non-Catholic, was for twelve years in the British Army; he lived for seven years as a nomad Arab in the desert and travelled extensively in India and the Far East; he has written screen plays for motion picture studies in Hollywood, and has been a lecturer in England and the United States. This varied background explains both the merits and the defects of his biography of Pere de Foucauld.

He has written a very interesting story, "as good as a novel"—or a Hollywood screen play. His account of the facts of de Foucauld's life agrees substantially with that of the standard biography written by Rene Bazin, French Catholic and Academician. But his interpretation of the facts is open to question.

The disproportionate amount of space which he devotes to the women in Charles' life—holy ones and not-so-holy—leads one to suspect that the author is thinking of another screen play. He writes at great length of Charles' early dissipations. This is explained by the necessity for "dramatic contrast" with the later life of saintly self-sacrifice, but at times the treatment smacks of the not uncommon misinterpretation of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican: he seems to be praising the sins and not the penitence. And in one place the author gives a truly astounding explanation of de Foucauld's ability to bear his awful self-inflicted penances and self-denial. It is due to the fact that he has had a surfeit of sensuality! "The reformed rake can sometimes live without the 'lusts of the

flesh' more easily than the ordinary temperate person." This is hard to believe—especially when we consider that Charles was barely thirty years of age when he dedicated himself completely to the ascetical life.

The author lays great stress upon what he considers Pere de Foucauld's "obstinate will" and insubordination to his religious superiors. He attributes the frequent changes in Charles' career to this self-will, plus "luck". Charles de Foucauld was undoubtedly a man of strong likes and dislikes. But his own voluminous correspondence and the many approving letters written about him by his contemporaries, including prelates, religious men and women and his former superiors in La Trappe, suggest that his might have been an extraordinarily strong will generously cooperating with extraordinary graces.

During his long years as a priest in the Sahara, Pere de Foucauld sent much information of military value to his friends in France, among whom was the hero of Morocco, General Laperrine. This fact is mentioned by his French biographer, Rene Bazin, and by R. V. C. Bodley, who frequently alludes to his "invaluable services as a military intelligence agent". Bodley is puzzled, and perhaps shocked, by de Foucauld's identifying the cause of France with the cause of Christianity. But this is understandable in a French Catholic of Charles' day and earlier; he sincerely thought that the two causes were closely related. Whether he was objectively right is another question. Today he probably would be denounced for making his Church the "tool of imperialism". But whatever might be said about the prudence of Pere de Foucauld in so identifying himself with the interests of his native land, he certainly did not fall into any of the companion errors to such an attitude. He did not exploit the people, among whom he labored, for his own material gain, nor did he allow other Frenchmen under his influence to do so. Nor did he despise the customs of these Moslem tribesmen. Nor did he seek more to "Europeanize" the people than to Christianize them. He lived as they did, ate their fare, dressed as they did, conforming himself as closely as possible to their legitimate customs. He spoke their native languages and translated the Four Gospels for them. He did what he could to relieve their poverty and to develop home industries among them. Unconsoled by conversions, he freely dedicated the truly best years of his life to charity for others and austerities for himself, living as the poorest of the poor, attracting the tribesmen by his Christ-like personality, confident in the knowledge that years after his death his good example, Masses and prayers would have contributed some little bit to the conversion of his pagans and Moslems to the True Faith.

Bodley's treatment of Pere de Foucauld's "insubordination", of his relations with his beloved France, and, in general, of his moti-

vation leaves much to be desired. But still, provided the reader keeps this in mind, his time will be well-spent. If he is not otherwise acquainted with Charles de Foucauld, his reading of this particular biography will arouse his interest and will move him to learn more about this amazing man.

JAMES J. MEANY



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