

THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

THE outline proposed for this discussion on the theology of the laity is far too ambitious, and yet it would be difficult to deny that any of the topics proposed is devoid of theological interest. For what it is worth, it has been suggested that the following headings be developed: (1) the concept of the layman; (2) the framework of the concept: ecclesiology; (3) the categories: the sacerdotal, prophetic, and royal character of the Christian layman; (4) the apostolate of the layman; (5) the connection of a theology of the layman with the theology of history and the theology of terrestrial reality; (6) the spirituality of the layman. I shall take this as my outline, with the addition of a preliminary section on the importance of a theology of the layman.

I. IMPORTANCE OF A THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

In commenting on Aubert's recent book¹ on some aspects of Catholic theology in mid-twentieth century, Father Kevin McNamara made the following reflection:

Catholic Theology in recent years has dedicated itself in a special way to a sympathetic understanding of modern life and thought, in the hope of winning the contemporary world for Christ. . . . The efforts of theologians to find a place in the Christian scheme of things for the ideas that have become in a special way identified with the modern mind have focused attention on new objects of study and have been responsible for certain theological developments. The frontiers of theology have been extended in three directions particularly, so that today we have three almost completely new departments in theology: a theology of the laity, a theology of history, and a theology of terrestrial realities.²

In our discussion today we are concerned with one of these areas directly and with the other two indirectly. These preliminary

¹ R. Aubert, *La Théologie Catholique au milieu du XXe siècle*, Louvain, Casterman, 1954.

² Kevin McNamara, "Catholic Theology Today: A Recent Survey," *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, 21 (1954), 245.

remarks seem required in order to situate our endeavor in its proper context of both theoretical and practical import. We are dealing with a new area in theology, with all that this implies of uncertainty, groping, controversy, and some ultimate dissatisfaction. But it is an important area, and if theology is to fulfill its glorious task of discovering, ordering, and illumining divine truth, it cannot neglect this portion of its total enterprise.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the practical importance of a developed theology of the laity. "The winning of the contemporary world for Christ,"—that, in sum, is the goal. A theology of the laity seeks to discover the full dimensions of the divine significance of the Catholic layman. The layman looks to theology for enlightenment. On the layman's grasp of and devoted dedication to his role in the Church depend issues which have been described in the following terms by our present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII:

She (the Church) must today, as never before, live her mission; she must reject more emphatically than ever the false and narrow concept of her spirituality and her inner life which would confine her, blind and mute in the retirement of the sanctuary. The Church cannot cut herself off, inert in the privacy of her churches, and thus desert her divinely providential mission of forming the complete man, and thereby collaborating without rest in the construction of the solid foundations of society. This mission is for her essential. Considered from this angle, the Church may be called the assembly of those who, under the supernatural influence of grace, in the perfection of their personal dignity as sons of God and in the harmonious development of all human inclinations and energies, build the powerful structure of human intercourse.

Under this aspect . . . the faithful, and more precisely, the laity, are in the front line of the Church's life; through them the Church is the vital principle of human society. Accordingly, they especially must have an ever clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, the community of the faithful on earth under the guidance of the common head, the Pope, and of the bishops in communion with him. They are the Church. . . .³

³ Allocution to the Sacred College, *AAS*, 38 (1946), 149.

This passage has become almost classic in discussions of the theology of the laity since it was delivered in an allocution to the Sacred College in February, 1946. But it would be false to give the impression that it is an isolated passage. It merely puts more sweepingly and pointedly what the recent Pontiffs have continually insisted on: the importance for the salvation of the world of a knowledge of and implementation of the role of the Catholic laity. Even a casual perusal of the addresses of Pius XI and Pius XII makes this quite clear.

The literature on the theology of the laity is abundant, but it is only in more recent times that we have witnessed the appearance of syntheses attempting to co-ordinate and harmonize the whole field.⁴ This work is far from complete, but significant beginnings have been made, and some patterns have begun to emerge.

Under one aspect, it is true to say that most of theology is involved in the theology of the laity. All that is concerned with the theology of the Christian life is by that fact involved in the theology of the laity. But, as such, all this is not ordinarily meant, at least directly and explicitly, by the term "theology of the laity." What *is* meant is that which specifies the layman, as distinct from the cleric and the religious and the member of the hierarchy, within the total organism of the Church. This quest indicates a starting point and something of a framework.

II. THE CONCEPT OF THE LAYMAN

Père Yves Congar has noted that "there is only one valid theology of the laity: a complete ecclesiology."⁵ This we can assume as our framework: the theology of the Church. For a starting point within this framework we can select the notion of the lay member of the Church. It has been remarked often enough that the concept of the layman is put, all too frequently, in a negative way. Thus, the layman is the member of the Church who is neither priest nor

⁴ Cfr. Yves M. J. Congar, O.P., *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, Paris, Cerf, 1953; also G. Philips, *Le rôle du laïcat dans l'Église*, Tournai-Paris, Casterman, 1954.

⁵ Congar, *op cit.*, 13.

religious. Whatever may be the complex of causes which has grooved this notion in Christian consciousness—many have been offered: the whole disastrous, yet partially proper, separation of sacred and profane, beginning with the late Middle Ages; a limited grasp of the mission of the Church in the world; an overjuridical concept of the Church—whatever the source, the idea is obviously inadequate. Modern studies have attempted to restore the proper and full notion of the lay member of Christ's Mystical Body.⁶

The layman is the member of God's chosen people, the new Israel, the community of salvation, the *laos*, those to whom St. James referred when he said, "Brethren, listen to me, Simon has told you how God first visited the Gentiles (*ethne*) to take from among them a people (*laos*) to bear His name" (Acts 15:14). Or again, in the classic text from the first Epistle of St. Peter (2:9), "You, however, are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people (*laos*); that you may proclaim the perfections of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." This establishes the basic atmosphere in which the distinction of laity from clergy and religious may most healthily be made. It is the flavor which should cling to our use of the word "the faithful," *fideles*.

Within this totality of the new people of God, by divine institution there exists a special group, endowed with divinely given powers, consecrated by the special sacrament of Holy Orders. Also within God's people are the religious, at present clearly defined juridically in the Code of Canon Law, who are in general fashion, designated by the dedication of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

These are broad categories. There are in the reality of the life of the Church instances of individuals sharing in more than one of these categories. There is, for example, the priest who is also a religious. There is the female religious who, in contrast to the male cleric, is a lay person. There are, in more recent times, the members of Secular Institutes who make take vows of evangelical perfection without ceasing to be of the laity. But in broad terms our categories

⁶ Joseph C. Fenton, "Towards an Adequate Theological Treatise *De Ecclesia*," *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, 135 (1956), 183-197.

can stand. The layman is a member of God's people. He has not been specially consecrated by the reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders, but he has been in some way consecrated. He has not dedicated himself to the pursuit of perfection in the juridically recognized form of the religious life, but there is a perfection which is his.

This is all fairly obvious, but it needs saying as a preparation for a further distinction, implied in all the above but not yet explicitly noted. It is this: the layman is the member of God's people who, in the words of the "General Conclusions" of the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, is "engaged in the life of the world. . . . The laity in the Church, faithful to their vocation as the people of God, will fulfill their task by collaborating with the Hierarchy in the salvation of souls and by working to promote in the world conditions of temporal life adapted to the Church's redemptive mission."⁷

In this context, the "world" should not be considered sheerly as the profane as set over against the sacred. Neither should it be identified with that "world" which is the enemy of God, the empire of the adversary, satan, a kingdom of darkness. It is best understood, first of all negatively, within the terms of our framework, as that area of the human condition from which the priest is set aside for the sacral, redemptive functions of his priesthood and from which the religious separates himself by his mode and form of life. Positively put, it consists of God's creation of things and men; it is a totality of hierarchised values, material and spiritual, scientific and cultural, social and political.⁸ One set of terms which has been applied to explain this distinction is that of man's creative functions as contrasted with the Christian's redemptive functions.⁹ Creative: in the double sense of resulting from the fact of divine creation and working on the material of creation. These would embrace man's duties of personal, conjugal, and communal perfection. Redemptive:

⁷ *Actes du premier congrès mondial pour l'apostolat des laïques*, Rome, Comité Permanent des Congrès Internationaux des Laïques, 1952, Vol. I, 83.

⁸ Cf. Jean Mouroux, *The Meaning of Man*, New York, Sheed & Ward, 1948, 1-37.

⁹ A. de Soras, S.J., "Tâches créatives et tâches redemptrices," *Revue de l'Action Populaire*, 1951, 481-497.

in the double sense of flowing from Christ's redemptive act and applying the divine energies of that redemption to all humanity in order to redeem it. These would embrace all that falls within the direct competence of the Church: teaching, ruling, sanctifying.

There are dangers here. One danger is to use this distinction in such a way that the priest and religious are considered to concentrate solely on redemptive functions, while the layman devotes himself solely to creative functions. It is obvious that priest and religious participate to some extent in creative functions and that the layman's concern must be redemptive. The priest and religious withdraw from most creative functions in order to devote themselves to redemptive functions. The layman is open to all creative functions, he is engaged in them; it is in the midst of this engagement that redemption comes to him. Another danger is to identify the layman, as such, with the profane, forgetting that he is the member of God's people and therefore, as such, is in the redemptive order. Some have seen tendencies in this direction in Congar, for instance, although a complete reading of his work does not, to the present writer, justify this charge.¹⁰ Also to be taken into account here is the current use of the word "layman" to signify the amateur in contradistinction to the professional. The use of "layman" in this meaning is out of place in a theology of the laity.

In any case, the basic notion of the layman remains as that of one of God's people who is engaged in the life of the world. To attain a more precise concept of what this implies brings us to the framework in which the notion is to be located, that of ecclesiology.

III. THE FRAMEWORK: ECCLESIOLOGY

It is not necessary to repeat here the strictures on the inadequacy of some post-Reformation Catholic ecclesiology. It has been said to be too exclusively concentrated on the apologetic, the juridical, the hierarchic. If this be true, it is scarcely adequate as a framework for the theology of the laity. What is surely true is that current eccle-

¹⁰ Elmer O'Brien, S.J., "Ascetical and Mystical Theology, 1954-1955," *Theological Studies*, 17 (1956), 211.

siology stresses the elements necessary to illumine the layman's place and role. In summary, the scheme follows these lines.

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. Through the divine energies flowing into the Church from its head, Christ, the Church is the vehicle of salvation for humanity. Looked at in this way there are two main aspects to the Church. It is the institution or source of salvation, and it is the community of salvation. As institution, Christ has endowed the Church with powers of teaching, ruling, and sanctifying. Here the hierarchic, juridical structure of the Church is emphasized. But the Church as community of salvation, the community of the faithful, is just as authentically Christ's Mystical Body. Those who are members of this community are authentic members of Christ, even though they do not participate in any active way in the strictly hierarchic powers of the Church as institution. They live Christ's life and see in Him the exemplar of what they are. As the Mystical Body of Christ, the people of God share in the role of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. As one writer, Father Gustave Weigel, has put it:

The Catholic now realizes that Christ's work and mission are his: Christ's power to do works even greater than He did; Christ's knowledge shared through faith; Christ's priestly prayer offered yet again in the liturgy; Christ's apostolate in the communication of the glad tidings; Christ's suffering, by making up what is wanting in the passion of Christ, the Redeemer; Christ's social action, by imitating Him who want about doing good to all men and in every order of beneficence. All these things are clearly taught by the doctrine of the Mystical Body.¹¹

Note that there is no attempt in this analysis to minimize the place or the role of the hierarchical powers in the Church. The Church as community could not exist unless structured on the Church as institution. Or, more concretely, the laity live and move in and on the framework provided by Pontiff and Bishop. What is required is the exact perception of the simultaneous existence of the Church under both aspects. Over-emphasis either way is dangerous; fullness of vision is all-important, especially for the theology of the laity.

¹¹ Gustave Weigel, S.J., "The Body of Christ and the City of God," *Social Order*, 5 (1955), 275.

IV. THE CATEGORIES

From this necessarily brief and inadequate analysis it will be clear why it is that one set of categories in particular has received a great deal of attention in the attempt to discover the structural lines of the theology of the laity. This is the traditional triad of prophet, priest, and king.¹² There are many reasons for this choice. The three themes have a Scriptural basis, they are found throughout Patristic literature, and they make possible a fruitful integration of the theology of the laity with both Christology and ecclesiology.¹³ It is not clear that a thorough consideration of the Christian layman in his sacerdotal, prophetic, and royal character will embrace all that is required in a theology of the laity. Congar, who once thought that all might be organized under these headings, no longer finds them all-inclusive.¹⁴ After an investigation of each of these themes, we shall consider some of the other categories which may be required to complete a theology of the laity.

It should be remarked at the outset that these categories are not rigidly distinct, one from the other. They are more like dissections of a living reality. But there are modalities within the reality which make the dissection and the distinctions both valid and enlightening. In his two works on the background in tradition of the priesthood of the laity, Paul Dabin found the three categories closely interwoven.¹⁵ Christian reflection on the sacerdotal character of the baptized seems to stem not only from such texts as I Peter 2:9, already cited, but also from such texts as I John 2:20: "You have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things," and I John 2:27: "Let the anointing which you have received dwell in you and you have no need that anyone teach you." Christ, "the Anointed One," was anointed for the triple Messianic role of prophet, priest, and king. So, too, it was thought, is the Christian.

¹² Cfr. Congar, *op. cit.*, 159-453; Philips, *op. cit.*, 79-152.

¹³ Joaquín Salaverri, S.J., "La triple potestad de la Iglesia," *Miscelanea Comillas*, 14 (1950), 7-84.

¹⁴ Congar, *op. cit.*, 18.

¹⁵ Paul Dabin, S.J., *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans les livres saints*, Paris, Bloud et Gay, 1941; *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans la tradition ancienne et moderne*, Brussels, Les Editions Universelles, 1950.

The literature on the layman's participation in Christ's priestly function is vast, and we have not yet seen the end of it, since there is a kind of controversy currently taking place. Members of our Society have been prominent in exploring this field. Fathers Hesburgh, Rea, and Palmer come immediately to mind.¹⁶ There is room here for only one or two points to be stressed.

The Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism and Confirmation notably, are seen as incorporating one into the Mystical Body and through this incorporation giving one a participation in the prophetic, sacerdotal and royal functions of Christ communicated to the Church. St. Thomas' teaching on the sacramental character is a familiar one. Pope Pius XII codified it in *Mediator Dei* when he wrote, "By the waters of baptism, as by common right, Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest, and by the 'character' which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed to give worship to God; they thus participate, according to their condition, in the priesthood of Christ."¹⁷ The Holy Father then goes on to explain what this means.

In this most important subject it is necessary, in order to avoid giving rise to a dangerous error, that we define the exact meaning of the word "offer." The unbloody immolation at the words of consecration, when Christ is made present upon the altar in the state of a victim, is performed by the priest and by him alone, as the representative of Christ and not as the representative of the faithful. It is because the priest places the divine victim upon the altar that he offers it to God the Father as an oblation for the glory of the Blessed Trinity and for the good of the whole Church. Now the faithful participate in the oblation, understood in this limited sense, after their own fashion and in a twofold manner, namely because they not only offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest, but also to a certain extent, in union with him. It is

¹⁶ Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., *The Theology of Catholic Action*, Notre Dame, Ave Maria Press, 1946; James E. Rea, *The Common Priesthood of the Members of the Mystical Body*, Westminster, Newman, 1947; Paul F. J. Palmer, S.J., "Lay Priesthood: Real or Metaphorical?", *Theological Studies*, 8 (1947), 574-613; *Ibid.*, "Lay Priesthood: Toward a Terminology," *Theological Studies*, 10 (1949), 235-250.

¹⁷ America Press Edition, 44.

by reason of this participation that the offering made by the people is also included in liturgical worship.¹⁸

Recently Pope Pius XII has had occasion to warn against a misunderstanding in this matter.

The particular and chief duty of the priest has ever been 'to offer sacrifice'; where there is no true power to offer sacrifice, there is no true priesthood. . . . The Apostles . . . and not all the faithful did Christ ordain and appoint priests; to them He gave the power to offer sacrifice. . . . Thus the priest-celebrant, putting on the person of Christ, alone offers sacrifice, and not the people, nor clerics, nor even priests who reverently assist. All, however, can and should take an active part in the Sacrifice.¹⁹

He goes on to emphasize what we should like to insist on: "On the other hand, it should not be denied or called in question that the faithful have a kind of 'priesthood,' and one may not depreciate or minimize it."²⁰ This sharing of the laity in the sacerdotal function of Christ has a dimension mentioned in *Mediator Dei*.

In order that the oblation by which the faithful offer the divine Victim in this sacrifice to the heavenly Father may have its full effect, it is necessary that the people add something else, namely, the offering of themselves as a victim. This offering in fact is not confined merely to the liturgical sacrifice. For the Prince of the Apostles wishes us, as living stones built upon the cornerstone Christ, to be able as 'a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (I Peter 2:5). St. Paul the Apostle addresses the following words of exhortation to Christians, without distinction of time, 'I beseech you therefore . . . that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service' (Romans 12:1). But at that time especially when the faithful take part in the liturgical service with such piety and recollection that it can be truly said of them: 'whose faith and devotion is known to Thee' (Canon, Mass), it is then, with the High Priest and through Him, they offer themselves as a spiritual sacrifice, that each one's faith ought

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁹ *Magnificate Dominum*: Address to Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops Present in Rome for Ceremonies in Honor of Our Lady, Nov. 2, 1954, *The Pope Speaks*, 4th Quarter, 1954, 376-377.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 378.

to become more ready to work through charity, his piety more real and fervent, and each one should consecrate himself to furthering of the divine glory, desiring to become as like as possible to Christ in His most grievous sufferings.²¹

In another section of the same encyclical, the Holy Father notes: "Nor should Christians forget to offer themselves, their cares, their sorrows, their distress and their necessities in union with their divine Savior upon the cross."²² On this whole point Congar has a long development, seeing in every exercise of Christian virtue a form of interior cult.²³ The late Cardinal Suhard made much of it in one of his famous pastorals.²⁴ It can be seen that the whole life of the layman can somehow be recapitulated under the heading of his sharing in the sacerdotal role of Christ.

The laity's participation in Christ's role as prophet is not entirely distinct from the participation in Christ's sacerdotal role. In fact, Father Hesburgh, taking the concept of priest as mediator, sees a sharing in the prophetic office of mediating truth as a consequence of the sacramental characters of Baptism and Confirmation. He puts particular emphasis on the latter sacrament, which brings the Christian to the maturity of his powers. According to Father Hesburgh, confirmation completes the consecration of baptism. It gives a more perfect configuration and consequent fuller participation in Christ's work. The active power of Confirmation commits the layman to share especially in the mediation of Christ's truth to the world. In recent times there has been re-evaluation of the theology of Confirmation, and much emphasis has been placed on a grace specific to Confirmation for effective witnessing to Christ in one's living.²⁵ Thus a theme dear to lay apostolate groups would find a dogmatic foundation.

²¹ *On the Sacred Liturgy*, 47.

²² *Ibid.*, 49.

²³ Congar, *op. cit.*, 246-307.

²⁴ *The Church Today: The Collected Writings of Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard*, Chicago, Fides, 1953, 303-315.

²⁵ Th. Camelot, O.P., "Sur la théologie de la confirmation," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 38 (1954), 637-657. Cfr. Elmer O'Brien, *loc. cit.*, 203-205.

Here, as in the case of the sacerdotal character of the laity, a word of warning has recently been sounded by Pope Pius XII.

Besides the lawful successors of the Apostles, namely the Roman Pontiff for the universal Church and Bishops for the faithful entrusted to their care, there are no other teachers divinely constituted in the Church of Christ. . . . It is necessary to maintain . . . that there never has been, there is not now, and there never will be in the Church a legitimate teaching authority of the laity withdrawn by God from the authority, guidance, and watchfulness of the sacred teaching authority. In fact, the very denial of submission offers a convincing proof and criterion that laymen who thus speak and act are not guided by the Spirit of God and of Christ.²⁶

To think of the prophetic role of the laity solely in terms of teaching is to narrow the perspectives unduly. The concept is rather that of witnessing through word and work. The grace specific to confirmation is concerned with a fuller mature living of the total Christian life, not merely for one's own personal profit but especially for the whole Mystical Body. Camelot, in his study of the theology of Confirmation, thus sums it up: Confirmation gives a new resemblance to Christ, a closer participation in His priesthood, whence come gifts of strength for public witnessing.²⁷ It can be confidently predicted that as the theology of Confirmation is more accurately formulated we shall gain in our grasp of the layman's participation in Christ's prophetic role.

The most vague, and to that extent the most unsatisfactory, of our three categories is that of the layman's participation in Christ's royal function. Just as we unduly limit and risk falsifying the concept of the layman's prophetic role if we treat only of his possible teaching positions, so with the layman's royal role if we think only of a possible share in Church government. The most complete study of the layman's share in Christ's kingship has been done by Congar.²⁸ As a spatial representation, he uses Oscar Cullmann's figure of two

²⁶ *Si Diligis*: Address to Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops Present in Rome for Canonization of St. Pius X, May 31, 1954, *The Pope Speaks*, 2nd Quarter, 1954, 154-157.

²⁷ Camelot, *op. cit.*, 656.

²⁸ Congar, *op. cit.*, 85-145, 314-368.

concentric circles.²⁹ The inner circle, with Christ at its center, is the domain of the Church and its hierarchic powers. The outer circle, equally centered in Christ, is that of the world. Competence in this second sphere, that of creation, has been given to man. The microcosm of all creation, man is the molder of civilization, the creator of culture. Through man, the "Christo-finality" of the natural order is expressed. In the eschatological rule of Christ at the Parousia His dominion over both orders will be fully expressed. Now, in the time between Pasch and Parousia, the Church gathers all men into the unity of Christ's community of salvation. Man extends Christ's reign over natural creation. He "Christo-finalizes" the human temporal order in three steps: first, by freely giving himself to the supernatural energies of Christ's life, which come to him in the community of salvation, thus freeing himself from the bondage of sin and satan; secondly, by the Christian animation of the effort of the human temporal order toward unity and integrity, thus helping to liberate man from enslavement to the elements of the world, and for this purpose humanizing it to the maximum; thirdly, by summing up in himself the whole order of this creation and offering this microcosm, and through it the macrocosm, in a spiritual sacrifice.

In the light of this we can gain new insight into the profound codification of the relations of nature and grace, of the Christian and the world, of the Church and creation, that is contained in the maxim: "The only humanism possible is a Christian humanism." Or, to recall the set of terms used previously, man's creative tasks, set for him in the Garden of Eden when he was commissioned to increase, multiply, fill the earth and dominate it, can only be fulfilled if his redemptive tasks are fulfilled, never forgetting that redemption comes through the Cross alone. The perspectives here are wide; they are no less than the harmonious working of nature and grace for the salvation of humanity.

Here we may think again of the passage from Pope Pius XII cited earlier: "The Church may be called the assembly of those who, under the supernatural influence of grace, in the perfection of their personal dignity as sons of God, and in the harmonious development of all human inclinations and energies, build the powerful structure

²⁹ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1950.

of human intercourse. Under this aspect . . . the faithful, and more precisely, the laity, are in the front line of the Church's life; through them the Church is the vital principle of human society."³⁰

Yet, it does not seem that these three categories, of prophet, priest, and king, exhaust the possibilities of the theology of the layman. There is the whole area of the apostolate, the layman's sharing in the mission of the Church. It is true that the functioning of the layman in his three roles will constitute his apostolate. But there are elements which come to light only when seen under the concept of the apostolate.

V. THE LAY APOSTOLATE

A study of the writings of Pope Pius XII, for instance, indicates that the apostolate is an element of every Christian life.³¹ It has been noted often enough that the special needs of our times make this imperative. But the apostolate flows from the very nature of Christian life in any era. The conditions of its exercise will vary according to the particular age.

In *Mystici Corporis*, Pope Pius XII remarked: "All who claim the Church as their mother should seriously consider that not only the sacred ministers . . . but the other members of the Mystical Body have the obligation of working hard and constantly for the upbuilding and increase of this Body."³² In *Summi Pontificatus*, he writes: "The duty (of the apostolate) is one binding upon all who have been called into that kingdom . . . by their regeneration at the font."³³ But in his address to the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, held in October, 1951, he made some qualifications.

All the faithful, without exception, are members of the Mystical Body of Christ. It follows that the law of nature, and still more pressing, the law of Christ, impresses upon them the obligation of giving a good example by a truly Christian life. . . . Can we say that everyone is called to the apostolate in the strict sense

³⁰ Cfr. note #3.

³¹ Henry Olsen, "Pius XII and the Lay Apostolate," *Clergy Review*, 37 (1952), 463-477.

³² America Press Edition, 43.

³³ *The Catholic Mind*, 37 (1939), 910.

of the word? God has not given to everyone either the possibility or the aptitude. One can hardly ask a wife and mother, who has to look after the Christian upbringing of her children and has to work at home besides to help her husband feed their little ones, to do apostolic work of this kind. The vocation to be an apostle is, therefore, not addressed to all alike.³⁴

He goes on to note that it is not easy to draw an exact line of demarcation showing precisely where the true apostolate of the laity begins. He proposes several examples. What of a mother's educative influence on her children? Or teachers engaged in their profession? Or a Catholic doctor who never wavers when there is question of the natural and divine law in his professional capacity? Or the statesman sponsoring a generous housing policy in favor of the less fortunate? The Holy Father remarks that some would not call this strictly apostolic work. But he states: "We recognize, however, the powerful and irreplaceable value, for the good of souls, of this ordinary performance of the duties of one's state by so many millions of conscientious and exemplary faithful." In summary, he notes: "The apostolate of the laity, in its proper sense, is without doubt to a large extent organized in Catholic Action and in other forms of apostolic activity approved by the Church; but apart from these, there can be and actually are lay apostles,—those men and women who see all the good to be done and the possibilities and means of doing it; and they do it with only one desire: the winning of souls to truth and grace."³⁵

Quite recently there has been a discussion on whether or not the lay apostolate is not more properly to be seen in the work of the Christian layman in shaping civilization on all its levels, while Catholic Action would be the collaboration of the Christian layman in the apostolate proper to the hierarchy.³⁶ This would be a reversal, it seems, of the terminology and concepts in current use. It may be that the answer is to be sought in the views of Carpay.³⁷ Thus, the

³⁴ *Actes*, 46-47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁶ Karl Rahner, S.J., *Schriften zur Theologie*, Einsiedeln, Benziger, 1954, Vol. II, 339-373.

³⁷ H. Carpay, S.J., *L'Action catholique: essai de justification historique et de précision doctrinale*, Tournai-Paris, Casterman, 1948.

layman is, by and large, the member of the Church who shapes social institutions by his presence and operation in them. The dimensions of his apostolate here are those of the Christianization of the institutions of his environment. There is a twofold action required: a strictly spiritual action, inspired by Christian faith and charity, which directly and immediately aims at the religious and moral renewal of the total life of mankind; secondly, a social, cultural action, likewise inspired by Christian faith and charity, which directly and immediately aims at the institutional structure of society, in order that it may favor and foster man's spiritual renewal, his Christianization. The lay apostolate would embrace both, but Catholic Action would be restricted to the first.

VI. THEOLOGY OF HISTORY AND OF TERRESTRIAL REALITIES

It is not possible to take up, in any detail, the question of the relation of the theology of the laity to the theology of history³⁸ and what is called terrestrial reality, including what is included under a theology of work.³⁹ But some indication may be given of the field. The basic problem is this: the layman is the member of the Church who lives his Christian life in the world, and the theology of history raises the question of what must be the Christian's attitude toward the world. What should be the Christian layman's basic attitude toward the arts, techniques, culture, work, civilization, human society—the totality of our twentieth century industrial and technocratic civilization?

Much work is being done on these questions. They are currently topics of popular discussion in the Catholic press. Gustave Thils has embarked on a long, systematic investigation of the whole area.

³⁸ Bibliographies are to be found in Gustave Thils, "La théologie de l'histoire; note bibliographique," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 26 (1950), 87-95; W. Norris Clarke, S.J., "Selected Bibliography on the Theology of History," *News*, Institute for Religious and Social Studies, November, 1953; Charles P. Loughran, S.J., "Theology and History: a Bibliography," *Thought*, 29 (1953-1954), 101-115.

³⁹ Cfr. Henri Rondet, S.J., "Eléments pour une théologie du travail," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 77 (1955), 27-48, 123-143.

Three volumes of his work have appeared thus far.⁴⁰ Suffice it to say here that whatever may be the results, they will cast light on the theology of the laity.

VII. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAYMAN

The final heading proposed is that of the spirituality *of* the layman or *for* the layman. We must avoid any of the implications in the perhaps badly phrased "lay spirituality," to which so much exception has been taken. Christian spirituality is one, although it has taken many forms in the history of the Church. Our question is: what does our theology of the layman tell us of the particular modality of the Christian life which will be the layman's way to Christian perfection?

Ecclesiastical approval granted to the Secular institutes has indicated that the pursuit of Christian perfection is possible without withdrawing from the world, if there had ever been any doubt of this. But there is an insistence on perfection being sought through an apostolate that is not only exercised in the world but by means of the world, through the professions and activities of the sphere of human culture and civilization. It seems obvious, then, that the first great characteristic of a spirituality for the laity will be that of an engagement in the works of the world and not that of a withdrawal or separation. The contrast here can be overdrawn; the Cross is central to all redemptive activity. But the emphasis cannot be that, say, of the *Imitation of Christ*.

The layman must be very conscious of going through things to God. The mood of St. Ignatius' *Contemplatio Ad Amorem* would seem most appropriate. Congar has attempted a summary of the principal elements of a layman's spirituality.⁴¹ He must have a great consciousness of his place in life as a divine call, expressing God's will, finding in the details of his life the response to this divine call—in short, a vocation. He must see his life as obedience

⁴⁰ Gustave Thils, *Théologie des réalités terrestres: I. Preludes*, Paris, Desclee de Brouwer, 1947; *II. Théologie de l'histoire*, Paris, Desclee de Brouwer, 1949; *Théologie et réalité sociale*, Paris, Casterman, 1952.

⁴¹ Congar, *op. cit.*, 590-629.

to God's will, the performance of his tasks as conformity to the divine will, and in this union of wills will be charity, the essence of perfection. He must have a sense of responsibility for the salvation of the world, seeing all that he does as contributing to this, directly or indirectly. He must have a sense of sacrifice, uniting his daily sufferings through the Mass to Christ's unique redemptive act.

How all this, and much more, flows from the layman's sacerdotal, prophetic, and royal character is apparent. But having said this, I leave the practical working out of this spirituality still to be done. The harmonization of the principles of ascetical and mystical theology with this "lay" orientation of the Christian life still lies ahead, although promising beginnings have been made.⁴² In this endeavor the existential experience of the layman may ultimately prove a decisive factor.

The importance of liturgical participation is obvious. The layman must see in the liturgy a focal point of his redemptive function. Through the liturgy in its central act, the Mass, are mainly channeled his redemptive forces. In the cycle of the liturgical seasons the layman must each year re-enact the history of salvation, from creation through Incarnation to Redemption. He must see in the liturgy the symbol and exercise of his corporate role in the Mystical Body. Similarly, he must see his life as gradually growing into the perfect prophetic witness, as he controls in kingly fashion the forces of his own nature and of the world around him toward the final definitive redemption of all men and all things.

At the outset I remarked that the theology of the laity is still in a state of uncertainty, groping, controversy. But its importance will not allow us to turn away from it in dissatisfaction. Our Society can do much to help bring this area of theology to precision. Much depends on this consummation devoutly to be wished. Perhaps our discussion here today can contribute its share "in the hope of winning the contemporary world for Christ."

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⁴² Cfr. "Select Bibliography on Spirituality for the Laity," *Theology Digest*, 4 (1956), 8.

Digest of the Discussion:

Father Palmer, S.J., opened the discussion by noting that the prophetic mission is generally linked with Confirmation. In line with this Crehan's work on Baptism and Confirmation can be a little disconcerting. The identification of the prophetic mission with Confirmation is something new, with no tradition and which comes from the separation of Baptism and Confirmation. There is no theological foundation for it. What would be the reaction to Crehan's survey?

Father Keating, S.J. The objection would be to the separation of Baptism and Confirmation, and to the identifying of the prophetic mission with Confirmation.

Father Palmer. There is a nice lining up of the priestly character with Baptism, and of the prophetic character with Confirmation. The difficulty is in the fact that this has no ancient patristic foundation.

Father Keating. The foundation for the three categories is in the anointing. Baptism and Confirmation go together.

Father Palmer. There is a regal significance to the oil, but should we distinguish Baptism and Confirmation? Another problem is that Confirmation is not necessary to salvation? If there is a specific function for the laity from Confirmation, should not the Church and the theologians insist more on it?

Father Keating. Camelot brings out that the perfection of the Christian layman is given with Confirmation. Confirmation is not simply equivalent to the prophetic rôle. Camelot uses vague terms to explain what Confirmation adds to Baptism.

Father Palmer. Confirmation *seals* the graces of Baptism. It does not give new graces. This (and here I hope I am not unjust to Crehan) is Crehan's view.

Father Keating. O'Brien refers to the dissociation of Catholic Action from Confirmation. The citation from the document of Pius XI to the Archbishop of Lisbon with regard to the obligation of taking part in Catholic Action is not an authoritative document.

Father Patrick Sullivan, S.J. With regard to the fact that Confirmation seems to add nothing new to Baptism, though the early tradition is obscure, we have the principle that each sacrament is specifically different and has a different sacramental effect. The Fathers were not thinking in terms of our categories.

Father Palmer. The strengthening of graces would be a special grace. The deputation to office would indicate some new function. Have simply raised question about Crehan's view without necessarily agreeing with it.

Father Simonitsch, C.S.C. St. Thomas treats the deputation in Baptism with relation to personal sanctification, and in Confirmation with relation to the sanctity of others. Dom Vonier also treats this.

Father Palmer. This was recognized from St. Thomas' time. Was it an insight of St. Thomas? What foundation is there for it?

Father Augustine Rock, O.P. We can overdo a looking for things in the Fathers. It is only well on in the Middle Ages that there is an awareness of what a sacrament is. We can have progressed with regard to Confirmation. If the character imprinted in Baptism is indelible why is there a need for this sealing, The problem of Confirmation is a modern one that we must discuss. The presumption is that something new is added.

Father Palmer. We should study the Fathers.

Father Rock. It may be something the Fathers did not mention. We may cite the case of the Assumption. One reason for its definition was the fact the contemporary Hierarchy teaches this. We can go too far in looking for patristic support. Frequently, the main thing is to see whether there is any objection from the Fathers.

Father Keating. Paul Dabin, S.J. collected all texts uncritically. He was criticized severely for trying to read back our modern development into the Fathers.

Father Eugene Gallagher, S.J. Found the paper quite impressive. I am not clear on Kingship and would like to set up a chain reaction of thoughts on this. First of all, the idea of making direct apostles of laymen is nonsense. The layman has to make a living. Few can afford taking time out to study for the apostolate. Their primary objective is to make a living. We priests must remember that we are merely instruments. God's main design is to get laymen. Where are laymen kings? Here. It is not that they are priests, but that they are soldiers, kings to conquer the world. The central idea is in kingship—worldly achievement from a different aim. They do the same things but the motive is changed. Send out the laymen to compete in creative activity, but from a different motive. Laymen cannot really be priests and prophets, but they can be kings.

Father Keating. This is moving in the lines of Father Congar—the redemptive and creative functions, the conjugal function, the communal function etc. The layman must perform a creative function in a redemptive way.

Father Gallagher. The priest has a redemptive and prophetic function. The layman has a creative function. We must turn out model men in their own line. This is apologetic of its very nature. Their work is from a different motive. The direct aim is creative. The remote and indirect aim is redemptive.

Father Keating. We must not minimize the redemptive function. I feel that the reality is as described, but there is question of terminology of direct and creative, and indirect and remote and redemptive. Congar

is in this line. Through the layman the whole structure of society is Christianized.

Here, there followed a rapid exchange of views in which Msgr. Fenton took strong objection to the views of Congar.

Father O'Keefe, S.J. Some would seem to identify the concept of prophet with the narrow notion of the prediction of future events. When the notion of prophet is taken in its proper sense as of one who is the mouthpiece of God, one who speaks for God, one who shows the finger of God in events, past, present and future, then surely, the notion of prophet can be predicated of the layman in more than a metaphorical sense. It is to show the design of God in events.

Father Keating. Nowhere in the paper is there an identification between the prophetic character and the prediction of future events. Care must be taken in bringing out that with regard to the note of kingship, the layman is not a member of the hierarchy and has no jurisdiction. With regard to the note of prophet, it is the hierarchy alone that proclaims divine truth authoritatively. Perhaps, the problem is one of terminology.

Father Rock. In our ecclesiological treatises in fundamental theology all too often the treatment is that the formal element is the hierarchy and the material element is the laity. The formal element acts, while the matter is passive. But all belong to the laity since all receive salvation from the Church. From Baptism there is a graded participation in the priesthood of Christ, and in this sense everyone belongs to the hierarchy. Can we use this? The difficulty is in equating the hierarchy with the formal element. This considers only the institutional aspect of the Church.

Father Keating. The layman has jurisdiction in the sense that he rules the family. Seems to be question of a different jurisdiction.

Father Palmer. *Mediator Dei* brings out a distinction of kind and not degree in the jurisdiction of the priest and of the layman.

Father Rock. *Mediator Dei* seems to have a different context in mind. Wouldn't seem to rule out what has been said.

Father Sullivan. There seems to be some confusion with regard to essential difference and analogy. The priesthood of the laity and of the priest are essentially different, and yet analogous. What about prophet and king?

Father Palmer. Each function is analogous to the primary analogate, Christ, and to the secondary analogate, the newly ordained priest.

Father Gallagher. The layman's prophetic and kingly mission is in terms of his work *ad extra*. The direct plane on which he can operate is his work *ad extra* because of Catholic excellence.

Father Rock. What about his position as head of the family?

Father Gallagher. This is something larger and not restricted to the family.

Father Rock. The distinction in functions is something that requires investigation.

Father Peter Hudson, O.S.B., to Father Gallagher. Would you deny royalty to the priest?

Father Gallagher. No, not at all. Here we are referring to the *secular* order, and here, the layman is king.

Father Frederick Crowe, S.J. There is the problem of the relation of theology to philosophy behind the discussion. Doctrines develop because of underlying philosophy, e.g., the Trinity. We need a philosophy for the laity. What are its elements?

Father Keating. Maritain speaks of this, and gives an ethical analysis of the place of man in the midst of creative things. For moment I can think only of the philosophy of man.

Father Crowe. That is fundamental. Is kingship dominion?

Father Keating. It is question of the structure of society. Combining the natural pattern and what theology gives would bring in the theology of history.

There followed a discussion on faith and philosophical understanding.

Father Palmer. Have there been any attempts to outline a course on theology of the laity for the laity?

Father Keating. Some circulars were received from the Mid-West, but their content is unknown. There is the work of Philips and Congar and there is Hasseveldt's work on the *Church, a Divine Mystery*.

Father Simonitsch. We are in a period of transition. It means buying lots of books and spending money. The question is whether you can teach theology in a liberal arts course, as liberal arts experience. There will be a 5 or 6 year process before anything is ready.

Father Keating. There is Father Weigel's suggestion of the *Summa* and the Mystical Body.

Father Simonitsch. Is it a pedagogical problem?

Father Keating. Once you have the principles set, yes.

Father Van Ackeren, S.J. Does the distinction between the power of orders and of jurisdiction throw any light on the problem?

Msgr. Fenton. There is a fine chapter in Billot's *De Ecclesia* on the interdependence of the powers of orders and of jurisdiction.

Father Van Ackeren. Does this distinction enlighten Father Gallagher's remarks? It might help to work out the participation of the layman in the kingship etc. of Christ within the Church. He can never be a priest in the proper sense, but he can be a teacher and king in the Church. He can grow primarily in these functions.

Father Gallagher. Interest is primarily in a practical point. "King" is not to be taken as a *mere* metaphor.

There followed a short discussion on the distinction between proper analogy and metaphor.

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