

It could be of course that, unlike Protestants, we have come to take our religious experiences for granted and cease to be alert to them—the way we slumber over our mass gives point to this. Or it could be a more profound reflection of the differences between Catholic and Protestant spirituality. The author here is not concerned with differences such as these. What matters overwhelmingly to him is that we all should share the one same Christ our Lord.

Nor can we fairly quarrel with his thesis as a whole: that what the world lacks most is faith, what man suffers from is loneliness.

Seneca once said that society was 'a bringing together of wild beasts'. In this he was being picturesque, but scarcely accurate. Wild beasts do seem to have a sense of solidarity that is not often apparent in men. And as for ants and bees, says our author, 'just try preaching individualism to them!' It is only man who tries to make himself a law unto himself and ends by crumpling up in total anguish.

Nor can he hope for cure until, in common with his fellows, he turns in perfect faith to God alone, Father of all, and learns from him how to preserve the delicate balance between freedom and submission.

ERIKA FALLAUX

WHAT IS MAN? by René Le Trocquer; Burns and Oates, Faith and Fact Books, 8s 6d.

Any attempt to confront the Christian and existentialist philosophies on man is faced with this difficulty: the two philosophies imply certain seemingly irreconcilable presuppositions. Man as depicted in Christian philosophy has his origin and his end in God; sin being the source of suffering and death. Human existence therefore, in all its historical phases has a 'reason': we can explain it, give a coherent account of it. In the existentialist view such a claim is utterly gratuitous, faith not fact. It is not a question of whether the Christian view is true or false, but whether it is an authentic picture of man's historical condition as we find it, or whether the Christian view offers any effective means for suppressing or supporting the tragedies of life here and now. Existentialism claims to interpret the historical fact of human existence, and finds it devoid of 'reason': meaningless and absurd, having only one future certainly—death and disintegration of the human personality. The Christian and existentialist philosophies of man are talking about the same thing, but because their views are so radically different they speak a different language. They may be using the same words but with different connotations. This linguistic difficulty makes it extra hazardous to attempt any sort of dialogue between them.

The small book under review is an effort to express the Christian philosophy of man in existentialist language. Man is made to the image of God. A composite of spirit and matter, man's vocation consists in the arduous task of reaching a closer personal relationship to God. It is this vocation that defines man.

As Sartre puts it: 'God, the supreme value and end in the transcendental order, represents the permanent and ultimate limit of being in terms of which man insists upon being told what he himself is. To be a man is to move towards the attainment of the existence of God. Or, in other words, man is fundamentally a desire to be God'. Man's vocation is a call to unity: unity in himself, union with God, union with other men. Consisting of body as well as spirit, human existence is situated in history. Man is historicity: an existence progressively achieving meaning through time. Disunity is the inevitable consequence of sin, and man's awareness of this disintegration within his being and of the historicity of his existence, produces the sentiment of *anguish*. Should he avail of this sentiment to 'go it alone', to close in upon himself, man's anguish will make him egocentric. He will end up in the pessimism and despair of existentialism. Should he on the contrary convert his anguish into an awareness of that infirmity in which grace can operate, man will have opened the way to the saving power of God. Anguish will turn to hope. Ultimately, therefore, it is only by the grace of God that man can give meaning to his existence and realize the vocation to which he is called. Christian hope, then, is the only alternative to existentialist despair.

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SECULAR INSTITUTES, by Gabriel Reidy, O.F.M.; Faith and Fact Books, Burns and Oates, 8s. 6d.

This addition to a series we have come to expect much of does not disappoint us. It is authoritative, compact and complete, as far as is possible in a field so rapidly expanding (though not in this country). It contains a list of approved Secular Institutes and a bibliography that is, as it claims, select and not merely haphazard. This is a book that could do much to dispel the ignorance or, still worse, the uninformed enthusiasm for Secular Institutes that is still widespread fifteen years after the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* of 2nd February, 1947.

In that Constitution, Pius XII spoke of 'new and unrivalled forms of confederation which particularly answer the needs of the times', so it may seem strange that Fr Reidy takes us through a succinct, stiffish course of history with chapters on the earliest beginnings of what grew into the formal religious life, the Monastic Age, the Rise of the Friars and Third Orders, the Counter-Reformation and the Revolution and Post-Revolutionary developments. But as we read on we realize the stupendous scale that is the only correct one for considering what is 'new' in the Church. Pius XII himself in *Provida Mater Ecclesia* wrote: 'It is plain to all how closely and essentially linked has been the history of the Church's holiness and of her universal apostolate with the history and annals of canonical religious life. By the grace of the Holy Ghost, that un-failing source of life, they have daily developed in amazing diversity and been