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Towards a New Mysticism by Ursula King

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some readers and too simple for others. This cannot be avoided given the author's subject matter. There is no way to understand the mind of John Paul II except by grappling with the original works of the great philosophers with whom Wojtyla has been locked in argument for many years. One also has to understand the theologians who have shaped the Pontiff's mind. A great merit of Williams' book, then, is to point beyond itself toward key primary sources.

The third and final section of Williams' study briefly discusses the thought and action of John Paul II under ten headings. This section, though sketchy, contains many valuable insights into the thought of Karol Wojtyla as Pope. A more extensive discussion of selected papal speeches and writings would have been most helpful.

Many readers will find this fine book tough going, not only because of the subject matter, but also because Williams' writing style is often heavy and cumbersome. •

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TOWARDS A NEW MYSTICISM,

Ursula King, New York: Seabury Press, 1980, 306 pp.

Ms. King's work is subtitled "Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions" and it is with a consideration of the latter element that I would like to begin this review.

In this book's forward, the great sinologist Joseph Needham mentions the fact that Teilhard "never acquired a detailed knowledge of Asian religious beliefs. At regular intervals the author reminds us of this fact. There are no less than nine references to Teilhard's inadequate knowledge of Eastern religions,

expressed, for example, in phrases like "very definite shortcomings," (p. 16), "outsider" (p. 143), "superficial" (p. 143), "obviously unfamiliar with details" (208), and so forth. If Teilhard's understanding of Eastern religions was indeed this deficient, his opinions this ill-founded, the reader begins to wonder why he is being subjected to a review of them.

Gradually it becomes apparent that, for Teilhard, "Eastern" was a poorly chosen label for a certain kind of mystical temperament found alike in the East and in the West. "Eastern" stood for a life-negating mysticism whose dominant idea was the complete dissolution of the personality in the divine ground. Though Teilhard had certain strong affinities with 'Eastern' monism and pantheism (all is one/all is God), he was passionately opposed to this kind of mystical posture, and he uses it as a foil in order to articulate his "new" mysticism, a mysticism that he hoped would further man's evolution and be appropriate to the dawning world-community. It would be, in his words, "a superior, synthetic form of 'mysticism' in which the strengths . . . of Oriental 'pantheism' and Christian personalism converge and culminate!" (p. 204)

Ms. King's title, *Towards a New Mysticism*, refers to her evaluation of the substance and promise of Teilhard's vision. Unfortunately, what Teilhard once said about his own attempt to describe his vision is true of the author's as well: "Impossible for me not to pursue this vision in a series of essays that keeps getting longer and longer without my yet having managed to grasp exactly and fully what I feel . . ." (p. 204) Instead of providing us with the needed precision, the author seems content to repeat Teilhard's neologisms and generalizations. There is, in fact, too much repetition here and, as a result, the reading is intermittently tedious. The book's themes are not significantly developed and the fault she attributes to Teilhard — "his vision of ultimate unity and coherence lacks the necessary detail; indeed this is its most serious defect" (p. 217) — is hers as well. Over and over again we are left with tantalizing, but upon inspection, empty, pronouncements. For example, "Teilhard sees the vast process of evolution as one of expanding interiorization and spiritualization through integration and unification." (p. 196)

Despite these drawbacks, there is still much that is notable. One cannot, for example, fault the author on some aspects of her scholarship. Strikingly evident is the care with which she has gone through Teilhard's voluminous writings, including his correspondence, in order to properly gauge the effect that Teilhard's experiences in Egypt (1905-08) and China (1923-31 and 1932-46) had upon him. She has been meticulously attentive to chronology in

order to convey to her readers the full evolution of Teilhard's thought and the role that the East played in it. Generous endnotes and appendices which list those sections in Teilhard's work where he specifically treats of pantheism, monism, mysticism and comparisons with Eastern religions should be very useful to Teilhard's scholars.

Moreover, much that is of value in Teilhard's work receives proper emphasis from the author: Teilhard's attempt to stress God's immanence in the world; his passionate insistence on the unitive cooperation of science and religion in the task of conscious evolution; Teilhard's profound affinity with nature and his abiding sense of its ultimate sacrality; the Christian bedrock at the root of his universalist vision; his unflagging insistence that mysticism — an ever more profound consciousness of Divine Presence, not only for the few, but for the many — is the *sine qua non* of the spiritual transformation of mankind.

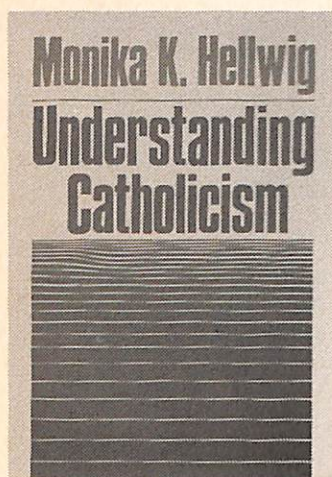
Perhaps the most provocative aspect of the book is its discussion of religion and evolution. Teilhard's idea of evolution, as we know, includes God within its purview. Not only man and matter, but God too, evolves. This conception of cosmic process stands in sharp contrast to more traditional views, such as those of the "perennial philosophy" articulated by men like Aldous Huxley, Frithjof Schuon and Huston Smith. There, in line with most of the great religious traditions, God or ultimate reality is understood as pure actuality, present to all time without being subject to it. The perennial view is not, however, wholly devoid of a developmental element. Hope for the evolution of humankind lies in the possibility of greater and greater numbers of human beings awakening to the Divine Reality. But that reality is itself untouched by the vicissitudes of time. Moreover, for the perennial philosophers, the possibilities of transcendence were as fully open, perhaps more open, to the people of ancient times than they are to the people of today. Modern man's spiritual sensibilities have atrophied. Spiritually speaking, we are devolving.

Teilhard would not agree. He refuses to speak solely of a spiritual evolution. For him there is but *one* evolution, and the biological aspect known to natural science is only a part, albeit an extremely important one, of a total cosmic evolution toward an as yet unborn spiritual state. "No past religious teaching," says Teilhard "can fully cope with the newness of mankind's present development. What is most needed is a creative religious effort . . . a whole new philosophy of life, a whole new ethical system, and a whole new mysticism." (p. 182) Clearly, for Teilhard, the perennial insights of the world religions

are not enough. They must be combined with the "new insights of the modern world in evolution." (p. 159) The tension between the evolutionist and perennial views of our spiritual task has created considerable ferment in contemporary philosophy of religion and Ms. King's identification of the issues is helpful.

Toward a New Mysticism is, in sum, a chronologically-oriented study of the development of Teilhard's new and evolutionist mysticism, with special attention given to surmises about the roles which Teilhard's years in the East and his readings in Asian philosophy and religion played in that development. I would assume that Ms. King's intended audiences are students of mysticism, those interested in what religious consciousness offers to the survival and fruition of the global community and, of course, scholars and other lovers of Teilhard. •

PHILIP NOVAK



UNDERSTANDING CATHOLICISM, by Monika K. Hellwig, Paulist Press, 1981. 192 pp. \$4.95.

One of the most critical factors in evaluating a book is a determination of the audience for which it has been intended. In the words of its author, this book is intended for "people who worry when they have questions about their faith". It is meant also for those who discover that "old explanations" have lost their capacity to provide "coherent meaning." It would appear then from the stated purpose of the author as well as from the tone and texture of the book that its intent is pastoral.

Dr. Monika K. Hellwig is a writer and lecturer of note. Her life-long interest

seems to be centered in a ministry or care for people's faith and lives. *Understanding Catholicism* has been written for the inner needs of the human heart rather than for the public exigencies of academic life. This is not to say that the author, a professor of theology at Georgetown University, has not done her reading or research. Nor is it to imply that the informed reader or even professional theologian cannot benefit from this book. It is clear, however, that one reads this book for the peace of heart it provides. Dr. Hellwig will, for example, refer to the major controversies of the day in her writing but she does so in an irenic tone and with an obvious interest in allowing the reader to live with the conflict rather than to take sides in the issue.

There are moments of considerable theological insight in these pages even though the author's intention, as we have seen, is not in this direction. The descriptions of the cultural, theological, and temperamental differences between Alexandria and Antioch in the early Church are very well done, indeed. The sections on "Jesus, Savior and Son of God" and "The Death of Jesus, Our Liberation" are the best in the book. This is as it should be. The pastoral intent of the author would become most creatively alive in writing about the personality and career of Jesus. It is not unexpected that one would write with theological vitality when addressing those issues with which one is most emotionally engaged.

The best theology in the Church emerges in its effective preaching. It is no accident that the great theologians of the first Christian millennium were also the most persuasive preachers and the most visible in pastoral ministry. Theology tended to become less brilliant when it was locked into seminary confinement and esoteric research. This book of Dr. Hellwig follows this tradition. It is a book of preaching as well as a book of theological reflection.

There are problems in the book as there are in all books. Sacraments are discussed without sufficient reference to the complexities of current questions in this field. Confirmation, for example, is dealt with in one short paragraph. Perhaps this is Dr. Hellwig's way of saying that we have never known exactly what to do with this Sacrament from the time when we separated it so thoroughly from the administration of Baptism. In the section on Orders, Dr. Hellwig speaks of the subdiaconate in a manner that might lead the reader to think the order is still in existence. There are, furthermore, references to the natural and the supernatural which seem somewhat traditional. This may be Dr. Hellwig's attempt to steer a middle course in her book. She does know both contemporary and conventional theology even though she favors the

conventional in this book. The reason for this seems to be with the pastoral purpose of her writing.

In spite of this, Dr. Hellwig writes compassionately of the heretics in Church history and shows effectively how often they were well intentioned and devoted people.

We have seen before how the author can deal well with theories in conflict. The Alexandria-Antioch dialectic is handled well. Even more striking is Dr. Hellwig's presentation of the Augustine-Pelagius debate. She shows how two men, both highly motivated, both passionately concerned about people, the Church, and truth itself could come to diametrically opposed conclusions. Augustine's personal experience and temperament made him pessimistic about human nature. He concluded that people would be moral if they were made vividly conscious of their sins and fallibility. Pelagius feared that pessimism would lead people to lose hope and thus become immoral more easily. He wanted to stress the strength and reliability of human resources. History remembers as enemies two men who were really allies in their love for the same realities. They differed only in the means not on the purpose of life or on the motives that ought to develop it.

Understanding Catholicism is a book of less than 200 pages. Yet the author discusses the whole range of theological and doctrinal issues which occupy the Church's energy. She deals with creation and revelation, sin and redemption, Christology and the Resurrection, ecclesiology and sacraments, grace and death, heaven and the Trinity. Dr. Hellwig challenges us throughout to become what we believe. •

ANTHONY T. PADOVANO

STAGES OF FAITH: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

James W. Fowler, Harper & Row, 1981 332 pp. xiv

In 1974, James Fowler published a brief article in *Religious Education* that outlined his nascent theory of faith development. That article provoked wide-spread interest. Religious educators, theologians, and developmental psychologists alike have since been following Fowler's thinking as it has been presented in subsequent articles, symposia, addresses, seminars and workshops. "Faith development" has become an organizing concept, especially for religious educators. And, though