secure a hold over him, is not giving. To give is not to seduce.' (p. 118.) Or again, 'If generosity enjoys its own self it degenerates into complacent self-satisfaction. This enjoyment of self is not joy, for joy is not a satisfaction but an exaltation. It is only in so far as it is introverted that joy becomes enjoyment.' (p. 119.) And frequently he opens up to us new vistas for our journey towards the truth: 'to say that one loves a being is to say, "Thou, at least, thou shalt not die".' (p. 62.) In another place, without explicitly mentioning theology, he makes us alive to the Trinitarian roots of our everyday life: 'Fundamentally, I have no reason to set any particular store by myself, except in so far as I know that I am loved by other beings who are loved by me'. (p. 8.)

Nevertheless, this second volume of his Gifford lectures does not really fulfil the hopes one had of it. After putting it down one remembers such sentences as those quoted; one remembers a particular chapter, that on 'Freedom and Grace', for instance, or 'Testimony' or 'Death and Hope'. But it is extraordinarily difficult to say what it is all about. The reader of '*Faith and Reality*' will certainly be the richer for having read it, yet scarcely equipped to give an account of his riches. However, these remarks may be wholly beside the point, for it is said that God is no arithmetician in his accounts with us—and one imagines that M. Marcel similarly dislikes accountancy.

DONALD NICHOLL

CORRESPONDENCE

To The Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Sir:—In his valuable article on 'The Pattern of Perfection' in your July number, Fr Oswin Magrath says: 'The Pope's recent allocution to the Congress of Religious in Rome, in which he stressed the compatibility between the religious state and the cure of souls, might allow us to envisage a diocesan clergy which formed a religious institute whose proper end was the cure of souls by a solemn and perpetual obligation. Such an institute, on St Thomas's principles, would seem to approach most closely the perfection of bishops.'

May I point out that Canons Regular—who rank first in the Western Church's hierarchy of religious institutes—answer almost exactly to this description? They are not, it is true, each and every one of them *obliged* to the cure of souls; but they *are* the only religious who exercise the cure of souls and hold benefices *by right* as distinct from privilege, and this they do precisely in virtue of their remote origin

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as that part of the official diocesan clergy which lived *regulariter* (i.e., in community and practising the 'common life').

The close dependence of the canon regular on the episcopate is symbolised by his use of that essentially episcopal vesture, the rochet, apart from which his dress varies in the different monasteries and Congregations of the Order. It is because of its *essentially* clerical character and its special relationship to the episcopate that the canon regular's is said to be the most perfect form of the religious life (albeit it is by no means the most austere).

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, owing to the special circumstances of the times, the canons became exempt, like other religious, from the direct jurisdiction of the bishops; but for them this exemption remains something accidental and extrinsic. As a modern canon regular, Abbot Yves Bossière, C.R.P., says: 'Although juridically exempt, for all that concerns their parochial ministry canons regular are dependent on the authority of the bishop, just like all other parish priests. When he leaves his monastery for a dependent parish, the canon regular, while remaining under obedience to the superior who watches over his religious perfection, becomes directly subject to the bishop and responsible to the bishop for the parish of which he has been placed in charge.'

The Canonical Order is represented in England today by the Canons Regular of the Lateran (a Congregation of Austin, or Black, Canons), the Premonstratensians or White Canons, and the modern Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception.—Yours, etc.,

DOM MICHAEL SEWELL, C.R.L.

Sir:—In reading through the April issue, I noted in one article, that by Conrad Pepler, O.P., a bit of a slip. I hope you will not mind my calling your attention. I assure you it is only in a friendly attitude that I mention it. On page 500, at the start of the third paragraph, we read: 'Mary, the blessed Virgin, has never been given a priestly title, except by the extravagant'. The statement is not quite accurate. If you do not mind, I shall summarise a few facts in that connection (my source for this information is an article, '*Marie et le Sacerdoce*', by P. Pourrat, P.S.S., which appears in the recent symposium *Maria* I, 801-24, Beauchesne, Paris, 1949).

In 1872 there appeared a work by Mgr Van den Berghe, *Marie et la Sacerdoce*. It contained a treatise on the notion of the Virgo Sacerdos. On August 25th, 1873, Pius IX sent a letter of approval to the author, saying that Mary had been so closely united to the sacrifice of her Son; 'ut Virgo Sacerdos appellata fuerit ab Ecclesiae Patribus'. (Quoted, p. 815.)

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On May 9th, 1906, Pius X gave an indulgence of 300 days to a prayer which referred to Mary as the Virgo Sacerdos. (Quoted on p. 819.) This prayer tried to make clear that while Mary had not of course received Orders, there was a legitimate sense in which she could be addressed as Virgo Sacerdos, more real than that priesthood of the laity mentioned in I Peter 2, 9.

Yet the way was open to misinterpretation. Accordingly, on January 15th, 1913, the Holy Office wrote a decree forbidding images depicting Mary in priestly vestments. Although written in 1913, the decree was not issued until April 8th, 1916, in A.A.S. 8 (1916), 146. One cannot but suspect that Blessed Pius X, though reluctantly consenting to the writing of the decree, continued to hope it could be avoided—hence it appeared only after his death.

Theologians understood that this decree was only a disciplinary measure to curb abuses, and that accordingly the devotion and doctrine were not condemned. Yet in 1928 the Holy Office advised the review, *Palestra del Clero de Robigo*, that an article on the Virgo Sacerdos was not proper. (cf. p. 821.)

Accordingly the review asked Fr Hugon, O.P., to find out what the Holy Office had in mind. On May 10th, 1927, he replied that the Holy Office wished that this devotion be dropped, because uninstructed souls might fail to understand. (Exact wording quoted on p. 822.)

Hence it is correct to say that this devotion is not now approved. Yet it is inexact to say that the title was never given 'except by the extravagant'. The present disapproval is obviously merely disciplinary, to avoid abuses. If there were doctrinal error it could never have been approved by Pius IX and X.—Yours, etc.,

WM. G. MOST (Rev.)

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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