

IS CELIBACY OUTDATED? By Ida Friederike Görres. Westminster: Newman, 1965. Pp. 95. Paper \$.95.

The title of this excellent book, catchy as it might be, does not do justice to the book's contents. The author does not treat celibacy as a fashion that can be dated or as an accidental appendage to the Christian priesthood. She goes right to the heart of the matter to show that "even hallowed sacramental marriage is, as a symbol and likeness of union, still insufficient transient and distracting." Celibacy is not "a paragraph in Canon Law," nor is it "a particular manifestation of asceticism. The real question is of "a concept of man, requiring celibacy and conditioned by it, a unique concept without parallel, the idea of the virginal priesthood of Christ."

The author shows the reality of this concept by pointing to the history of the Christian concept of dedicated virginity which has been actualized in the Church since early times. She points to the Gospel figures of the faithful servant dedicated entirely to the master; of the watchman who is not to be distracted by anything in caring for the business of the master; and of the messenger intent only on the message he has to convey. She brings out the idea of the angelic man of Christian asceticism, pointing out the fact that to the writers of the past "angelic" meant "complete," "active," "efficient" — and not merely bodiless. She lays most stress on the idea that the priest is <538> bound over entirely, as in marriage, to Christ in his Church, to give her members his undivided loyalty, love, devotion.

All this is not merely garnished with sayings from old ascetical treatises. The truths from asceticism are set in a context of an intelligible and realistic discussion of the question in the light of modern psychology and faith. Underlying the whole argument is a positive and discerning attitude toward the real love by which a human being matures.

In the second section of the book ("Relations Between Priests and Women"), the author establishes as a basic principle, which she calls a "truism," that the priest should be to women "as a man and a human being and, as such, as a 'Man of God.'" It is, as she says, a truism; but she works out from this starting point with such honest, concrete example and psychological understanding and enlightened faith that the truism becomes effective instruction that many a priest might never be able to get from his own reflections on his male experience. A priest will only with difficulty appreciate the woman's view of the priest unless it is spelled out, as in this book, by a forthright, intelligent woman.

A most valuable book for priests and seminarians. All religious will find it helpful in establishing a positive attitude toward the life of celibacy. The book does not furnish direct arguments for the current debates on the subject. It goes beneath the current arguments and tells what celibacy really is and what to do about living it.

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SOURCE: Book Reviews, *Review for Religious* 25 (1966), 538–539. Archive.org.