

A New Kind of Catholicism

What Happened at Rome?, by Gary MacEoin (Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 192 pp. \$4.95); ***The De-Romanization of the American Catholic Church***, by Edward Wakin and Father Joseph F. Scheuer (Macmillan. 318 pp. \$6.95); ***The Human Church***, by William H. DuBay (Doubleday. 192 pp. \$4.50); ***Authority in the Church***, by John L. McKenzie, S.J. (Sheed & Ward. 184 pp. \$3.95), and ***Freedom Today***, by Hans Küng, translated from the German by Cecily Hastings (Sheed & Ward. 176 pp. \$3.95), examine the "quiet revolution" that has been taking place in the Church during the past century. Michael Novak is an assistant professor in the special program in humanities at Stanford University and author of "The Open Church" and "Belief and Unbelief."

By MICHAEL NOVAK

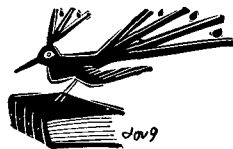
NO WORD so excites the imagination of the contemporary Catholic public as *Freedom*. *Freedom* is arriving late among Catholics, generations later than among other groups in our culture; but the delay does not make the taste less sweet.

The titles of the books under review, taken in any order, read like chapter headings in a plausible account of recent Roman Catholic history. By now everyone knows that for almost a hundred years a quiet revolution has been building up beneath the surface of Roman Catholicism, and that through the brief charismatic leadership of Pope John XXIII this revolution erupted before the public gaze. Charles Péguy, as a schoolboy, boasted before the turn of the century: "A Catholic renaissance will come about through me." St. Thérèse of Lisieux, a lovely girl who died of consumption in 1897 at the age of twenty-four, thought she had discovered a "new way" of Catholic holiness, ordinary, existential, unencumbered, fresh. There is no doubt about it: the reform has been self-conscious and John XXIII was its choicest fruit, as well as the culminating, creative sponsor of its legitimacy.

What Happened at Rome?, Gary MacEoin's brief study of Pope John's

Council, pulls no punches. A short, mild-mannered Irishman, MacEoin in his youth had drunk Catholicism of the old style to its bitter dregs, as he related in a haunting book, *Nothing Is Quite Enough*. A world traveler and friend to countless of the obscure bishops, missionaries, and laymen who make of world Catholicism so variegated and living an organism, Mr. MacEoin brings sharply to bear in a very few pages the understated clarity of the journalist's art. He recognizes the "marriages or concubines of convenience between the Roman mind and reactionary groups" in Latin America and other parts of the world—that Roman mind concerned with Latin scholasticism, eternal essences, and expediency which the majority at the Vatican Council struggled valiantly to cast into the dustbin of history. Mr. MacEoin's account of the four years of the Council is trenchant and to the point.

On the other hand, the best features of Edward Wakin and Joseph F. Scheuer's *The De-Romanization of American Catholicism* are (1) its title and (2) its final sentence: "In twenty-five years, we shall not recognize the Roman Catholic Church in America." The title is exact; American Catholicism is becoming with each succeeding month less "Roman" (no ideal is currently as obnoxious to the new genera-



tion of Catholics as *Romanità*) and more "American." "The adjective *Roman*," the authors write, "is the expression of a cultural straitjacket." Many would agree. Moreover, many would agree that to Catholics "America" means emphasis upon freedom rather than upon authority, "humility and openness" rather than privilege, personal responsibility rather than corporate obedience, an orientation toward the concrete needs of men in this world rather than toward the abstract considerations of Platonic otherworldliness.

The authors, however, have little to add analytically to what has been said by others since 1954 (most notably in Thomas McAvoy's collection, *Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life*); and most of the others have written with more dignity and grace. The

footnotes (for the book seems to have hopes of being counted as some sort of "sociology") are largely snippets from popular magazines. Many serious problems face American Catholics before they complete the conquest of their maturity and responsibility; this book could have made a contribution, and thus its disagreeable, masochistic tone leaves one doubly sad.

In his three-paragraph introduction to *The Human Church* William H. DuBay, the courageous, outspoken priest who has run afoul of Catholicism's most reactionary archbishop, Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles, speaks of "the comrades-in-arms throughout the world whose inspiration, suggestions, and support have contributed to this book in so many ways." In fact, no one was in a position to gain a more sympathetic world-wide hearing, no one could have driven a cleaner, more effective nail into the coffin of Roman-style ecclesiasticism than Father DuBay. Instead, he has written an angry book, a sloppy book, a half-baked argument.

FATHER DuBay is no mean thinker. He does not merely rage about his own difficulties or give us an autobiographical "Ouch!" Still, in arguing for a more pragmatic approach to Church politics, he is not himself pragmatic. He desires a union for priests—a sound, badly needed conception. Why, then, knowing the resistance such an idea generates, does he not call it an "association," a "confraternity," even a "sodality"? Call it by any name, but get it started.

There are internal contradictions in his argument. He wants a less highly organized church, and also one more highly organized for effectiveness in achieving social justice. He wants priests and bishops to speak only when there is a well-founded consensus among the people. As in the South? Or in John Birch parishes in Los Angeles?

A far more satisfying book is John L. McKenzie's *Authority in the Church*, a brilliant study of New Testament texts that speak of the differences between secular authority and the unique kind of authority proper to a Christian church. McKenzie, a Jesuit scripture scholar presently at the University of Chicago, sees in "the creeping secularization of authority" in the Church the bane of her history; the imitation by ministers of the Gospel of the methods of emperors, princes, and state officials. The New Testament, he reports, abhors the domination seen in secular power; permits no member of the Church to occupy a position of dignity and eminence; describes Church officers in words that place them on the lowest social level known in the Roman-Hellenistic world of the first century.

Authority, moreover, belongs to the

whole Church, not to particular officers; exhortations to submissiveness are addressed not to the members but to the officers of the Church. Authority is the responsibility of all the members of the Church; it is a function of a community's love for one another, and is directed to persons, not to ideas, or institutions, or things—"anything like a power structure is forever excluded from the Church. Love is the only power which the New Testament knows." The task of the Church is that of "creating new forms and structure for an absolutely new type of society."

This little book is dynamite, all the more so because it is written in an ironical, wise, well-rounded frame of mind. DuBay takes Roman power structures for granted; McKenzie gently uncovers their illegitimacy. "The Church does best what Jesus Christ empowered it to do, and he did not empower the Church to be every man's schoolmaster and every man's conscience."

No young man in the Roman Catholic Church, however, has done more for the achievement of freedom in the Church than Hans Küng, dean of the Catholic Theology faculty at Tübingen. *Freedom Today* inaugurates a series of "theological meditations," edited by Father Küng, which offer the most creative Catholic theologians an opportunity to bring their learning to bear upon the ordinary problems of ordinary people in the world. Many thousands of Americans will remember the blond hair of Father Küng shining in the lights as, in the spring of 1963, to still and electric audiences, he delivered his lecture (included in this book) "The Church and Freedom," a lecture which began with a long list of similarities between the Roman style of authority and Communism (he himself seems a kind of Yevushenko).

How does Hans Küng do so much? How does he do it so well? One hears these questions in the United States as well as in Europe. Küng's study of Karl Barth is an ecumenical landmark that stands far out in front even of the avant garde. His essay in this book on the freedom of the world religions, in which he concludes that, from a Catholic point of view, the path of the other religions is for most men the ordinary way to salvation, while Christianity is of itself an unusual and out-of-the-ordinary way, is of equal brilliance and of still vaster ecumenical importance.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

Column One should read: 6 (Gerald Green), 9 (Forster), 7 (Mann), 5 (Cozens), 11 (O'Neill), 8 (Kingsley), 1 (Sara Orne Jewett), 12 (Stevenson), 10 (Camus), 2 (Shaw), 3 (Waltari), 4 (Ibsen).

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Evolution as Revelation

Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ, by Christopher L. Mooney, S.J. (Harper & Row. 288 pp. \$6), synthesizes Teilhard's effort to rethink the data of revelation concerning Christ in the context of the data of science concerning cosmic and organic evolution. Cyril Vollert, S.J., teaches theology at St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas.

By CYRIL VOLLERT, S.J.

DURING his years of research in France Fr. Mooney, now professor of theology at Fordham, had the opportunity to scrutinize all of Teilhard's works, published and unpublished; the latter are still numerous. His reading and reflection led to the perception that the central theme unifying the many facets of Teilhard's thought is the relationship between the evolving cosmos, culminat-

ing in man, and the mystery of Christ. The book he subsequently wrote ranks with the important studies by Georges Crespy, Henri de Lubac, and Piet Smulders. As a synthesis of Teilhard's theological insights, it probably outranks them all.

Teilhard's general idea, conveyed in striking quotations from his own writings and in Fr. Mooney's clarifying expositions, can be summarized briefly, if inadequately. What previous centuries regarded as a cosmos is in reality a cosmogenesis, which reached up to biogenesis and ultimately issued in anthropogenesis. The laws governing cosmic and organic evolution have not ceased to function. What is to be the outcome, especially for man? If no final goal is attainable, despair will eventually smother the whole evolving process. Even in our own time, uncertainty about the success of the evolutionary movement is a source of disquiet.

The context of evolution within which



"Sure, it's hearsay—but it's great hearsay!"