

seiner Akzentsetzung auf der Nachfolge Christi in seinem „verborgenen Leben“, welches zum großen Teil in der gewöhnlichen Arbeit eines gewissenhaft arbeitenden Handwerkers bestand. „Das Leben Jesu in Nazareth ist in der einen oder anderen Weise das Leben unzähliger Menschen auf dieser Welt. Im Geiste Jesu verrichtet, erhalten die tägliche Arbeit, Schule, Studium, Berufsarbeit, die Erfüllung der tausend Pflichten einer Mutter und eines Familienvaters, die Aufgaben in Gesellschaft und öffentlichem Leben einen neuen, einen übernatürlichen Sinn. Sie werden zur Gelegenheit, ja zu einem Weg, um Christus nachzufolgen, gerade in und durch diese tägliche Arbeit Gott und unsere Mitmenschen so zu lieben, wie Christus das getan hat.“ (S. 124) Die Freiheit und Eigenverantwortung sowie die höchst unterschiedlichen Charaktere und Lebensumstände der Mitglieder des Opus Dei sorgen selbstverständlich für eine große Vielfalt an Realisierungen ein und derselben Berufung, aber dennoch gibt es Akzentsetzungen und konkrete Formen des Gebetslebens und der Askese, die für alle gleich sind. Diese entfaltet Rhonheimer fundiert und detailliert. Dabei widmet er sich auch der Frage, wie eine etwaige Berufung erkannt werden kann und welches der eigene Platz im Opus Dei sein könnte.

Welche Konsequenzen ein solcher Schritt hat, schildert Rhonheimer ausführlich und offen. Dabei spricht er mit etwas mehr Ausführlichkeit über das Leben der Numerarier, da sich das Buch vorwiegend an junge Menschen richtet. Bildungsmittel, Lebensplan, Familienleben, Stellenwert von Demut und Gehorsam, von Aufrichtigkeit und Großzügigkeit, von Abtötung und Loslösung... - eine Tour d'horizon, die keine (potentielle) Frage ausspart.

Das vorliegende Buch bedient hervorragend die Bedürfnisse der angepeilten Zielgruppe (zu denen getrost auch die „jung Gebliebenen“ gezählt werden dürfen) nach gründlicher Information. Manch anderer, der sich für das Opus Dei interessiert, wird durch die Ausführlichkeit erschlagen. Aber für diese gibt es ja reichlich alternative Literatur.

Birgitt Kerz

Martin RHONHEIMER, *Changing the World: The Timeliness of Opus Dei*, New York, Scepter, 2009, 138 pp. = *Verwandlung der Welt. Zur Aktualität des Opus Dei*, Köln, Adamas, 2006, 174 pp. = *Transformación del mundo. La actualidad del Opus Dei*, Madrid, Rialp, 2006, 170 pp.

*Changing the World: The Timeliness of Opus Dei* by Martin Rhonheimer, is a collection of four essays, three of which were given as conference papers in 2002 during the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. Fr. Martin Rhonheimer is a contemporary philosopher, author, university professor, and a priest of the Prelature of Opus Dei who offers

these essays as “points of departure for a theological, philosophical, and historical presentation [...] of the spiritual and pastoral phenomenon of Opus Dei”.

The first two chapters trace the main features of the spiritual message of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. The world is the normal milieu in which lay Christians are to sanctify themselves through their ordinary work, turning their work into prayer by doing it for God. Since the beginning of his apostolic work, Escrivá proposed that all Christians without exception were called to holiness in the midst of ordinary life countering the then prevalent view that only religious who renounce life in the world were completely pleasing to God. Rhonheimer explains that although Escrivá’s message preceded Vatican Council II, it was endorsed by the Council through its proclamation of the call of the laity to holiness in the middle of the world. In the second essay, Fr. Rhonheimer presents an interesting historical study that credits the Reformation with the first rediscovery of ordinary life with their proposal of the Protestant work ethic in their rebellion against the medieval Church. However, the author states, “neither the Lutheran idea of work as *profession* nor the Calvinist-Puritan idea of the sanctification of work was really aimed at the redemption of the world [...] and thus did not add up to a true affirmation of the world”. In contrast, Josemaría Escrivá proposes a *spirituality of work*, for the ordinary Christian layperson in which they do their professional work for the love of God thus making it a *work of God* that strives to solve society’s problems and creates a *civilization of love*. In addition to identifying the key aspects of Escrivá’s message on the sanctification of work, Rhonheimer explains the pastoral phenomenon of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei within the universal Church.

The last two essays are historical-philosophical treatises that trace the growth of Christianity in society from the time of the first Christians to the current era showing the Church’s changing relation to the political society: from Christianizing a pagan society, to becoming a religious-political unity, to once again seeking to influence a secularized and pluralistic society, and finally to finding itself proclaiming that freedom of conscience and of religion is a “right proper to each person that should be proclaimed by law”.

In the context of the development in understanding of religious freedom, Rhonheimer presents the thought of Josemaría Escrivá as pioneering. The Founder of Opus Dei defended the freedom of consciences, understood as the right to worship God, which cannot be impeded or forced. The teachings of Escrivá—preceding the Second Vatican Council—are of a spiritual nature, not juridical-political. The Council, with the Declaration on Religious Freedom, confirmed what he had thought and practiced: for example, in the 1950s he had asked the Holy See for the permission—which he obtained after insisting—to admit non-Catholics and non-Christians as cooperators of Opus Dei. “Error is overcome by prayer”, said Josemaría Escrivá, “by God’s grace, and by study; never by force, always by charity” (*Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá del Balaguer*, n. 44).

Fr. Rhonheimer suggests in *Changing the World* that Opus Dei presents a deep understanding with a distinctive perspective of the vision of the role of the Church in the world which was later proposed by the Second Vatican Council; and suggests that the lay spirituality and spirit of Opus Dei embodies the message of this Council. He shows how the Council's call for a re-evangelization and re-Christianization of the modern world can be accomplished by ordinary Christians sanctifying themselves in the middle of the world through their ordinary work. All of the articles published in this book are several years old and therefore do not have reference to current issues in the twenty first century society regarding the present challenges to moral and religious truths. They were all originally written in German and have references in the footnotes to German articles and books, and thus have little relevance to the English speaking audience. The third article in particular was written as a constructive rebuttal to the critique of Opus Dei by the German writer, Peter Hertel. Many of the counterpoints made refer in the footnotes to Hertel's works, all of which are only available in German.

Nevertheless there is value in looking at these problems through the perennial lens of the Christian faith. The conflict today to re-Christianize society is as current as it was in the time of the early Christians during the Reformation and in the last century. Fr. Rhonheimer presents Opus Dei as a new lay spirituality within the Church that will try to bring about this change.

Madonna Murphy

Miguel DE SALIS AMARAL, *Concittadini dei santi e familiari di Dio: studio storico-teologico sulla santità della Chiesa*, Roma, Edusc, 2009, 436 pp.

L'autore, docente di ecclesiologia presso la Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, presenta un'analisi in un certo senso innovativa. L'oggetto specifico del suo studio è la riflessione sulla santità *della Chiesa*, non semplicemente *nella Chiesa*. Il punto di partenza è la perplessità che può sorgere dall'affermazione che la Chiesa è santa e allo stesso tempo ci sono nel suo seno peccatori, senza cadere in contraddizione o assurdità. De Salis Amaral propone, quindi, di considerare la santità della Chiesa da una prospettiva storico-salvifica. In questo senso, segnala che il binomio *santità donata* e *santità da trasmettere* (la missione santificatrice della Chiesa) sarebbe un abbinamento più adatto e più consueto di quello tra santità oggettiva e soggettiva della Chiesa per spiegare meglio l'argomento. La santità donata risiede principalmente nel dono della Trinità, ma considera anche l'accettazione o la risposta a questo dono da parte dei membri della Chiesa (S. Maria, i beati e tante realtà di santità in terra alle quali si riferisce la comunione dei santi).

La santità che deve trasmettersi si riferisce alla missione di santificazione che la Chiesa svolge attraverso i suoi fedeli, e raggiungerà il suo culmine soltanto alla fine