



BOOK REVIEWS

DEMOCRACY'S SECOND CHANCE

by

GEORGE BOYLE

New York

Sheed and Ward

1944

177 pp.

In this book George Boyle discusses one of the most serious problems of our day, that of the flight from the land. With the rise of centralized-commercialism people from rural districts have been drawn towards illusory goals in the over-populated cities and towns. Having forgotten the real values of rural life, they have plunged into the cities to join the thousands of job-seekers in the mad scramble for economic security. To most of them this seems to be the ideal way of living. As a result rural life has become something to be looked down upon. Today young people from rural communities enter the cities in pursuit of an education. And when they feel they have completed their effort they remain in the cities to work. Thus the rural communities are being drained of their vital source of maintenance.

The inquiring person may ask the question why so many people have left rural communities to become job-seekers in the centralized centres. The author of this book indicates the most obvious reasons. Many isolated farmers, who probably through lack of knowledge or ability, have fallen into debt. Since they cannot see any way out of this crisis by remaining on their farms, they move to the cities where they hope to make a success. Again, a great number of fortunate farmers who have accumulated a fairly large amount of wealth enter the cities where they invest their earnings in an effort to increase their wealth. Furthermore, in most rural districts there is a lack of interests for the young people. Since rural life seems to hold nothing for them, they migrate to the cities. Even education does not uphold the virtues of rural living as it should. Boyle says concerning rural life: "A rural culture has never been established in North America." Therefore, we can conclude that in order to achieve a return to the land, a rural culture must be established.

The solution that George Boyle suggests to establish this rural culture is the formation of credit unions and co-operatives. In the case of credit unions a great benefit can be brought to all concerned once they are established. Farmers and fishermen, through the proper use of credit unions, would probably avoid all debt and hence would be able to make much further progress than they do under present conditions. In the opinion of the author, co-operatives could be one of the greatest aids in the establishment of a rural culture. For in the erecting and maintaining of co-operatives people learn not only to work for their own interests but for the interests of all involved. Thus they make the Christian virtue of Charity the keystone of their culture. Furthermore, a proportion of the profits obtained by the co-operatives would be returned to the co-operators instead of supporting the great capitalists as is the case in the present situation. Boyle, after commenting on the success of many of the co-operatives that have been established in the Maritime Provinces, concludes that once started they can bring a strong decentralizing force into action and in this way establish that rural culture which is so much needed.

In a great democratic country such as Canada, why is it that so many migrate to the industrialized centres to become slaves to the capitalists and capitalistic institutions? In DEMOCRACY'S SECOND CHANCE, Mr. Boyle proposes some of the reasons for the flight from the land and suggests some reasons that will bring about a return to it. For the person who desires to contribute something towards this back to the land movement, or who would like to return to his rural community but feels that it holds nothing for him, a great deal of help and inspiration can be found in this book. Even any person who holds that the city is the best place in which to live would do well to read this book which brilliantly describes the virtues of rural life.

—ALTON CRAIG '55

Blessed are they who have nothing to say, and who cannot be persuaded to say it.

Money, to be sure, of itself is of no use: for its only use is to part with it.

—Samuel Johnson.

THE ASCENT TO TRUTH

by

THOMAS MERTON

New York Harcourt, Brace and Co. 1951 318 pp.

If you desire to read a book which provides plenty of food for thought, you will find that **THE ASCENT TO TRUTH**, with its genuine sincerity and sound principles will more than fill your requirements. You will find this a great work of love, expressed in a logical process of reasoning, very enlightening and very inspiring. The attainment of that all-important goal, **TRUTH**, is presented very clearly in spite of the profundity of the subject.

In this book, Father Merton gives us a psychological insight into the workings of the human mind. He paints for us a clear picture of the frivolous things set up by man as his goal in life. The human being is a creature of strange makeup, but even strangers are the illusory desires which seem to satisfy the hunger of his mind. These desires are mere "Shadows" which offer no true happiness. They are delusions; childish things far removed from reality. The author points out the reason for this sad state of existence. Novelty is the theme of the crestfallen world. In spite of the fact that there is "nothing new under the sun" every generation of humans enjoys a false happiness in the search for something new and different. All this adds up to the fact that men are unable to think for themselves and thus do not recognize the real values in life and the importance of living a life of preparation, preparation for the ultimate end: the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision.

Father Merton's book shows us the way to that goal. The way to **TRUTH** is through contemplation. By faith we are led along this road from light to darkness. He writes of faith as "the dark night of the soul," and points out that the more the soul is darkened the greater light that comes to it. This journey, from the light of ignorance and impassiveness to the darkness of a full knowledge of God as unknown, ends in the binding of the soul to God in a Mystical Union.

In order to do this we must follow in the footsteps of Christ Himself. Our path must be paved with stones of self-denial, prayer and obedience. Many believe that we

will come to know God through visions and revelations. Others believe that we can reach such heights solely through the intellect. Father Merton shows the falsty of these notions. For the average person there is only way to God, only one kind of contemplation. This involves much more than mere human intelligence or direct contact with God. We must reach God through love and humiliation aided by the intellect. "The eye of the intelligence," says this writer, "is reason." Thus we must start from a mere grasp of the fundamentals of faith and through a long process of reasoning work our way up the ladder of faith until we have arrived at a reasonable knowledge of God. Then, and only then, will we be able to grasp something of that Profound Truth which is God Himself.

In addition to Father Merton's own ideas on the attainment of TRUTH, this book gives us an insight into the minds of three great saints. The way in which the author has woven the doctrines of St. Thomas, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa into the most outstanding work of his literary career adds much to its clarity and effectiveness. This also enables the reader to understand more clearly the outlook and lives of these great contemplatives and arouses in him a more appreciative attitude towards them.

Every reader ought to find this book a source of spiritual satisfaction and inspiration. The way in which the author puts himself into his writing gives a better picture of a man who is humble, intelligent, and deeply sympathetic towards human nature. The excellent language and extreme beauty of its literary composition will also add much to the reader's appreciation of the book.

—WILLIAM QUINN '55

Don't criticize other peoples faults, criticize your own.

—Confucius.

The only Education, the only Politics is that which concerns Souls, because in dealing with the problems of man, one must not oust man.

—Leon Bloy.