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An Aid To Reflective Prayer: Days of the Lord

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AN AID TO REFLECTIVE PRAYER

DAYS OF THE LORD. Volume I: Winter. Edited by William G. Storey. Foreword by Bishop John J. Wright. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. 219 pp.

Days of the Lord is a book for meditation which its publisher describes as a "modern breviary designed for the Christian who is actively engaged in the work of the world." In genre it might be called an anthology for the priedieu, and it comes to the reader with Bishop John Wright's recommendation that it "is easily the best meditation book of its kind to have come to my attention."

Mr. Storey's purpose was to provide a collection of meditative texts and commentaries for every Sunday, for all days of Lent, the octaves of Easter and Pentecost, the Ember Days, the feasts of Our Lord and the major feasts of Our Lady, the apostles and other saints. This first volume covers the Temporal from the beginning of Advent to Quinquagesima Sunday, and the Sanctoral from December to March. Two further volumes, one for Spring, the second for Summer and Fall, are meant to complete the cycle of the liturgical year. The texts are meant to provide springboards for reflective prayer, to help (as the editor tells us) to raise one's soul toward God "without constraining it in any way."

Perhaps the quickest way to give our readers an idea of what they will find in this book is to run through some sixty-odd names of authors and sources of the texts which have been chosen; they will reveal something of the character and flavor of this "breviary".

Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, D. H. Lawrence, Bede Griffiths, Emily Dickinson, Alfred Delp, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Danielou, Henri de Lubac, Blaise Pascal, Charles Peguy, A. M. Carré, Alban Goodier, Giovanni Papini, Gertrud Von de Fort, Gerald Vann, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, the Akathistos Hymn, Max Thurian, Karl Rahner, Hugo Rahner, St. Leo the Great, Romano Guardini, the Roman Martyrology, the Coptic Liturgy, St. John of the Cross, John Milton, Cardinal Newman, St. Peter Chrysologus, T. S. Eliot, St. Jerome, Robert Southwell, St. Thomas of Canterbury, John Donne, Gerard S. Sloyan, St. Justin, René Voillaume, St. Bernard, Gerard Manley Hopkins, St. Augustine, Stanislas Lyonnet, St. John Chrysostom, Pope John XXIII, Charles Burgard, the Ambrosian Liturgy, Francois Mauriac, Bernard Haering, Sigrid Undset, Walter Hilton, Tertullian, Yves Congar, Graham Greene, Jean Anouilh, Paul Claudel, Soeren Kierkegaard, Henri Gheon, Jacques Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

At a first reading one is intrigued at what D. H. Lawrence could contribute to a meditation book [Lawrence yields an eloquent passage on the way the liturgical year preserves the rhythm of life itself], or Jean Anouilh [the moving lines from the scenario of *Monsieur Vincent*: "It is only by feeling your love that the poor will forgive you for your gifts of bread"], or Emily Dickinson [Storey begins Advent with her "Winter Solstice"].—This is part of the charm of the book.

We are informed (on page 4) that this is an English version which depends on *Les Jours du Seigneur* (edited by P. Drujon and R. Cappanera) and *Die Tage des Herrn* (edited by Heinrich Bacht, S.J.). I have not been able to check how much Mr. Storey simply borrows from the French or German versions. (In any case, for the majority of its readers, this point should be of minor interest.)

To see the book from another angle: for *Sexagesima Sunday*, there is a text from John Chrysostom on St. Paul (the liturgy alludes to Paul in the Collect and the epistle is a pauline text); a paragraph from Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (the beautiful passage towards the end of the book which begins, "When he woke up it was dawn" and which ends with the thought—from Peguy?—"... at the end there was only one thing that counted—to be a saint.") intended as a gloss on the Gospel text, "Even so, the last shall be first, and the first last"; a germane selection from Guardini's *The Living God*, on the longing for God; finally, a few lines from Cardinal Lercaro's remarkable Council address on Poverty: the great moments of renewal in the Church are moments "in which the spirit of poverty has been affirmed and lived to the most manifest degree."—For the feast of *St. Francis Xavier* there is an introductory paragraph on the saint's life, and a longish text from one of his best letters, describing his missionary efforts in India, revelatory of his missionary spirit. (For a second edition, Mr. Storey might perhaps consider adding a few lines from another letter, the passage which ends with the cry from the heart, "O my brothers, come!")

As for the question, How good a book is it? This is always difficult to answer, when one deals with books for prayer and meditation. So much in this type of reading depends on individual taste; and often enough, on the mood of the day or the moment. One does not easily prescribe this sort of fare for another. But these texts for reflective reading are the choice of widely-read and intelligent anthologists, and one concurs with the citation from Fr. Robert Hovda (on the dust jacket) that this is a "sensitive and apt selection". If the two other volumes match the overall quality of the first one, there should be general agreement that *Days of the Lord* will prove a most useful anthology for the modern Catholic and that it should fulfill, for the moments of recollection of contemporary Christians (lay, clerical and religious) just what it set out to do.

One looks forward to volumes two and three with high expectations.

C. G. ARÉVALO, S.J.

WESTERN HISTORY AT A GLANCE

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION: An Historical Outline. By Joan Thompson. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964. vii, 287 pp.

Contrary to what one might perhaps expect from its title, *The Achievements of Western Civilization* is merely a manual of reference.