

Two books by U of A profs—one religious, one poetical

A QUESTION OF CONSCIENCE, by Charles Davis, Hodder & Stoughton, 251 pp., \$6.60.

Charles Davis' *A Question of Conscience* is probably the most difficult book of recent times for a practising Catholic to read and comment upon sympathetically and intelligently.

The Roman Catholic Church, unlike most Protestant denominations that I am familiar with, demands an almost fanatical reverence for authority on the part of its members. Consequently, no Catholic who has taken his religion seriously, much less a clergyman, can openly and defiantly break with the Church without a severe emotional backlash.

The awareness of this situation makes it very difficult to keep from reading such a backlash into Mr. Davis' very courageous attempt to objectively analyze his disenchantment with the Roman Catholic Church.

Charles Davis was one of the most prominent Catholic theologians. In December of 1966 he announced his decision to leave the Catholic Church. He is now a visiting professor of religious studies at the U of A.

Mr. Davis' decision to leave the Church created a great stir, especially since he is still a professed Christian, although he refuses to follow any particular de-

nomination. His book answers many of the questions which have been raised in the press.

Mr. Davis rejects the Roman Catholic Church because, he says, it has ceased to be credible for him as the divinely instituted embodiment of the presence of Christ among men. After giving an autobiographical account of how he came to this conclusion and what it has done to his external life, he embarks upon a very careful analysis of the concept of Christian faith.

Faith must remain the cornerstone of Christianity. However, says Mr. Davis, it must not restrict man, but must expand his sphere of consciousness. Faith must aid in the fulfillment of one of man's fundamental roles on this earth—the search for truth. To do this, faith must not only be looked on as a gift which must be re-examined and enlightened by the light of human reason, but must itself be based upon grounds of credibility. Although we cannot prove what we believe, it must at least be reasonable—historically, philosophically or otherwise—to believe at all. Mr. Davis sees the Roman Catholic Church as failing to embody this notion of faith.

Mr. Davis analyzes the Catholic Church from both a contemporary and a historical point of view. The historical analysis breaks

down into an attack on the related concepts of papal supremacy and infallibility, and the concept that the institutional structure of the Catholic Church is that instituted by Christ. Although reasonably convincing to the layman, one has an underlying feeling that Mr. Davis is not being completely fair to the orthodox Catholic position.

Granted, the institutional Church has been basically a political rather than a Christian mechanism. Some would hold that this was an essential part of the Church's mission for a large period of history. Although Mr. Davis mentions this argument, it would seem to have more validity, at least up to the time of the Reformation, than he is willing to grant.

After the Reformation, Mr. Davis asserts, no one Christian denomination had a monopoly of Christian truth, and without the others each is incomplete. Here, I suggest, he is on more solid ground, and his observations should be studied by those who are pushing for Christian unity.

Mr. Davis' analysis of the contemporary Church is frighteningly accurate. He speaks of fringe elements in the Church, and of people living Christian lives in spite of, rather than on account of, the attitudes and influence of the institutional Church. I think any observant twentieth-century per-

son must agree with his statement that the Roman Catholic Church (as well as the other Christian churches) is woefully inadequate as a living witness to the Christian way of life. And it is inadequate because its basic hierarchical structure, by its very nature, automatically works to preserve a political status-quo rather than develop organic Christian communities.

Having read several reviews before reading the book, one thing I was led to expect in Mr. Davis' treatment of the contemporary Church was an extremely bitter attitude toward Pope Paul VI. His attitude toward the pontiff, I feel, is anything but bitter. If Mr. Davis' treatment of Pope Paul is disliked in some circles, perhaps it is because the truth hurts.

Mr. Davis sees reform as unlikely. But if it does come, he suggests the impetus will come not from the structure but from dissident elements within the structure, probably the laity and the lower clerical orders.

One wonders, then, whether his disenchantment is not perhaps too extreme. Granted, being a Catholic automatically assumes acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church's structure. And certainly, as a priest it was impossible for Mr. Davis to become a "fringe" Catholic. But one wonders if, by placing the structure in a secondary position as regards to one's personal Christian life, the fringe Catholic might perhaps, eventually, instigate the sort of reform Mr. Davis and a great many Catholics believe is necessary.

In other words, perhaps Mr. Davis is too impatient.

However, Mr. Davis' book is on the whole very closely argued, and any short attempt to summarize and analyze it cannot do justice to the complexity of the author's thought.

But one thing must be said—the Roman Catholic Church needs this book.

—Ralph Melnychuk

VISION OF LOVE AND LONELINESS, by Lionel Mitchell. Carlton, 61 pp., \$2.00.

Lionel Mitchell is a former resident of Grenada, and is now a graduate student in commerce at this university. The purpose of this slim volume of poems is to "make a few persons more truthful and honest"—a noble purpose, but one which Mr. Mitchell does not carry off very well.

"I make no apologies for the style . . .", he says in his introduction. I am getting a little weary of poets trying to justify bad poetry by not making apologies for the style. In poetry, style is all but everything—nobility of sentiment is worthless when expressed in bad grammar, style totally devoid of poetic expression, and verses which are mangled painfully in order to achieve a rhyme.

It is difficult not to be harsh with this book, for the concept of poetry presented in it is one of simple insight (simple, in fact, to the nth degree) expressed in prose units of regular length, transformed into poetry by the use of rhymes. So assiduous is he in his use of rhymes, in fact, that Mr. Mitchell seems to be governed in his thoughts by what the next rhyme is to be—that is, he is not using rhymes, but the rhymes are using him.

One example will suffice:

Welcome, welcome, my white
year old friend
To my door I did not know
you had descend
No early morning rising could
be more rewarding
Than greeting you, friend, this
November morning.

The general feeling one gets from the poems is one of paranoia on the part of the author, intermingled with a willingness to see what is beautiful. But the atrocity of the style prevents these ideas from coming across well, and the poetry is nothing more or less than boring.

—Terry Donnelly

Arts Calendar

Symphony weekend; Tiny Alice at Citadel

The Edmonton Symphony swings into action once again this weekend, this time featuring pianist Philippe Entremont. At the age of 17, Mr. Entremont became First Laureate and Grand Prix winner of the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud International Competition, and has since become internationally known for his sensuous interpretations of the romantic repertory.

On the program this weekend are Stravinsky's "Pulcinella", Ravel's "Piano Concerto in G", Prokofiev's "Piano Concerto No. 1" (with Entremont as soloist), Glazunov's "Stenka Razin", and the "Espana" of Chabrier.

The concerts will be, as usual, on Saturday at 8:30 p.m. and on Sunday at 3:00 p.m., in the Jubilee Auditorium.

CITADEL

After setting attendance records with *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, the Citadel is following up with Edward Albee's *Tiny Alice*. Albee is among America's foremost playwrights, and has written *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *The Zoo Story*.

Toronto director Curt Reis is directing the play, which features Lynne Gorman in the title role.

Miss Gorman is backed up by Roland Hewgill, Edward Holmes, Robert Silverman, and Charles Herrick.

Mr. Hewgill plays the part of Julian, a saintly lay-brother of the Catholic Church, who meets temptation and trial when he is sent by his regal Cardinal to the immense mansion of the mysterious Miss Alice—"the richest woman in the world"—to conclude arrangements for a vast gift to the church. He is a timid man who has retreated from life into a self-negating sort of service, and who has almost subdued his passions.

Miss Alice is attracted by his shy sensitivity and avowed celi-

bacy, and she contrives to make him her lover. On the surface the story is a suspenseful tale of a man seemingly trapped in a weird, menacing mansion with cold victimizers, but beneath that are cryptic allegories about man's relation to God for which nearly every spectator finds an interpretation of his own.

The fact that Miss Gorman has a role in the CBC's *Barney Bloomer* need not disturb us too much.

There will be one matinee performance of the play, tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. The play will run nightly at the Citadel, 10030-102 St., until February 3.

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				4 x 450	4 x 450
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Mr. Murray Greenberg, Assistant Manager of our Edmonton office, will be on campus to discuss MONY career opportunities in detail. You'll find it an eye-opening and stimulating interview.

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Campus Interviews

Wednesday, January 24