

Epiphany, and Christmas Eve, in connection with the life of solitude and silence of the Charterhouse. It would be impossible to do justice to these simple but excellent instructions in the interior life in a short review: they should be read as they are. Although primarily intended for Carthusian monks, these sermons will be of great use and help to all those who, whatever the outward circumstances of their lives, seek God 'in simplicity of heart'.

BENEDICT STEUART, O.S.B.

RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE. By Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. (Burns & Oates; 9s. 6d.)

The title page of this little book is itself provocative; why 'A Practical Exposition for Religious Sisters'? Why not just 'A Practical Exposition for Religious' since it can be very truly said that obedience is almost more the business of men than women, seeing that the men should possess it very sincerely if they are to teach it to others, to Religious Sisters? Whether women are more prone to the abuse of authority, and therefore obedience, or not, is a vexed question, but it certainly concerns both sexes in equal measure. The contents of the book certainly apply almost equally to men and women *mutatis mutandis*.

Would it not have been as well if, at the very outset, the author had placed obedience in its correct setting among the virtues and perhaps made more of this aspect? It is not till page 57 that we are told 'obedience is a moral virtue, a quality in the will . . .' and here we are almost half way through the book! The positive nature of all virtue, and perhaps especially obedience, is a thing that needs stressing very much in a somewhat negative world of suppression. To be perfect is to act and do, not to suppress. Almost one third of the book is entitled 'Surrender of the Judgment'! There are such expressions as 'the complete surrender of his will through obedience' (p. 33) which surely suggests a cutting off or getting rid of one's will. Would it not be better to speak of the complete *Consecration* of one's will in obedience, which immediately suggests the use of the will in the service of God? Can one truly say that the negative quality of indifference is holy? Is this not rather of the nature of 'angelic purity' which in the sense of chastity just does not exist? The author has quite a lot to say about criticism, and points out that here the chief sin is one against prudence. This point might have been stressed even more, as so few ever accuse themselves in confession of the sin of imprudence. Obedience is the very life-blood of the religious life, and it is therefore all the more important that its relationship to all the other virtues should be clearly stated without depreciating either itself or the other virtues.

The best wine has been kept for the last. The best wine is usually the strongest! There is very much in the third part which is very humiliating both to subject and superior, and for this very reason is most salutary. Here is bold speaking, and very true warning. These things needed saying, and in no uncertain terms. Fr Valentine is to be very highly commended on the out-spoken words of this last part.

The frequent quotations from Bl. Humbert are very welcome as his works are all too little known to the general public. Perhaps this little book may also encourage a closer reading of that author. The same quotation is made twice from St Ignatius (pp. 67 and 75) but no reference is given.

DOMINIC J. SIRE, O.P.

A YEAR OF GRACE. Passages chosen and arranged to express a mood about God and man. By V. Gollancz (Gollancz; 10s. 6d.)

In his foreword the author tries to explain that difficult word 'mood'. He begins negatively—a mood is not a *doctrine*: the mood 'expressed in this anthology' is unfashionable because alien alike to the prevalent anti-religious humanism and anti-humanistic religion of today. The book, he says, expresses the mood that has been 'dominantly' his ever since boyhood, which is, I think, the perception of what Gerard Manley Hopkins (whom he quotes) reveals when he writes: 'And for all this, nature is never spent; there lives the dearest freshness deep down things'. The author has felt that 'love, with mercy and pity as its chief attributes, was the only reality, and that I, being real, was in communion with it'. There was one dreadful year, during which he lived 'in the hell of terror and despair', but even if by an effort of the will he can recollect and realise these, he does so, living 'in the love that faithfully cared for me and saw me through to safety'. Since the range of Mr Gollancz's reading is enormously wide, and since the book is explicitly stated not to contain a 'doctrine', the quotations cannot always be consistent: their contradictions may be apparent only, or real, in either case 'according to human understanding'. With that, we cannot quarrel, and indeed are grateful for many lovely passages from Jewish prayers, from Persian or Arabian writers, and the New Testament and later Christian writers, Catholic or not, are often quoted.

The author (who prefixes a phrase or two of music to each part) would like his book to be read 'as a consecutive whole', 'a continuous piece of writing by one hand, all now appearing for the first time'. This would be very difficult, if only because we would be bound to like some quotations much better than others, and to be brought up with a jolt by the 'contradictions', which would be too agitating for a 'bedside book' as, too, he would like it to be. There are five 'parts':