

ing channels of action for the contemplatives. It is good to find the problem tackled so well in these journals.

The Editor of the Quarterly *Mount Carmel* declares one of the principal ways of achieving this synthesis to be by way of the retreat movement (Summer 1957). As he says it in the primary movement behind Catholic Action. And yet the modern retreat must loose some of the shackles of nineteenth-century formalism if it is to achieve the 'community' effect of the true spiritual growth of the soul. It is true enough for the Editor to write:

When Christ had ascended into heaven the apostles, the future pillars of the Church, retired to the Cenacle where for a period of ten days they persevered in prayer with Mary the Mother of God, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost. It was in the Cenacle that the Retreat Movement was born. Were it not for that first retreat the apostles would not . . . have become founders of Christ's Mystical Body on earth.

But the gathering of our Lady and the apostles in the upper room was rather different from the average retreat. There it was a common action, they were all together persevering in prayer. Here we foster an individualistic spirit of piety in most of our retreats; the retreatants look down their noses at each other, find anything like a *Dialogue Mass* distracting to their own interior prayer, and have nothing to do with anyone except God and the preacher of the retreat. The retreat movement in this country will have to change considerably before it becomes the power it could be in sanctifying action for the apostolate in our own society.



REVIEWS

COMMUNAL LIFE. 'Religious Life' Series, No. 8. (Blackfriars, London; 19s. 6d.)

This is an excellent translation of the conferences given in France to a group of religious women and those who have to deal with them. Like the other volumes in the series, they attain a very high standard and will prove of great use to all who study the theory and practice of the religious state. Attempts have been made in recent years, even among Catholics, to question the utility and meaning of the religious state in an age when the lay apostolate is so much to the fore. These conferences provide an answer. The theme which runs through them all, and which is dear to the organizers of these reunions, is that the religious life is not something parallel to the ordinary practice of

Christianity, an extra added on, as it were, and in no way essential. Rather is the religious community a model of the Christian community as a whole, enriching it and giving it visible expression. It is 'a miniature Church within the Church' according to the Cistercians of the twelfth century. Thus the justification of the religious state is based on the idea of the Church as a community, and of the incapacity of man to attain his proper perfection save as a member of a community. The religious community being an image of the Church, it was a happy idea to begin with a conference on that image which the Church cast before her, the Old Israel. This is given by an acknowledged master of the subject, Father Albert Gelin, known to English readers by his *Key Concepts of the Old Testament*. There follow three essays by a Monk, a Friar Preacher and a Jesuit, on three of the best-known forms of religious life. These all contain much that is valuable, but perhaps the richest of all is the Conference on 'The Theology of the Common Life' by the Carmelite Father Paul Marie de la Croix. All of this requires careful reading and meditation. It will be repaid in full. Dom Juglar on 'The Mass and Office in the Common Life' is quite a mine of early Christian texts, while Father René Carpentier, S.J., has some interesting things to say on the place of religious life in the Church today and the meaning of the Counsels in the modern world. This essay, too, will repay careful study. Dom Feligondes's article will provide evidence of the generosity which French Catholics of today can show if given a lead. Others can do as much. The article on 'Motives for entering the Cenobitic Life', written from the point of view of the psychologist by Dr Rousset, may be of interest to some.

In general the conferenciers are to be congratulated on having sought to make a positive contribution to the subject, and to have kept criticism of certain well-known aberrations of the spirit of religious life to a minimum. In an increasingly critical world, which accepts no institution, however venerable, without demanding the why and the wherefore, they have made a most praiseworthy effort to answer the problems which His Eminence Cardinal Valerio Valeri, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, raises in his foreword. We owe much to them, and to the publishers who have put this excellent series at the disposition of the English-speaking public.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

STARS OF COMFORT. Conferences of Father Vincent McNabb. (Burns, Oates; 15s.)

One wonders how many more spiritual and theological treasures are still hidden away in Miss Finlayson's shorthand notes. Again we express our gratitude for another Father Vincent book. A new book,