

REVIEWS

DIRECTOIRE DES PRÊTRES CHARGÉS DE RELIGIEUSES. Edited by A. Plé, O.P. (Les Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

Year by year priests and religious have met to discuss the problems which face religious and those who have the responsibility for religious life. The findings of these meetings have fortunately been made available to all by the publication of the papers that were read and the discussions that followed. This present volume deals very ably with the problems of confessors, chaplains and all who have the spiritual welfare of nuns in their charge. The idea that being a chaplain to a convent is a convenient way of disposing of retired clergy is completely exploded, as also the notion that appointing confessors to nuns is a matter of no importance. What has been said at their conference of 165 priests, all of whom are experienced men, should give grave matter for thought. These priests were not all religious; there were ten Vicars General among their number. They speak with authority and sincerity, having obviously met with complaints from religious who have been treated with anything but consideration. This was no mere fact-finding conference. The questions dealt with are also practical; such questions as the proper preparation of conferences to the sisters and punctuality in the carrying out of the duties of a chaplain, not to mention a little practical advice about not interfering with the internal government of a convent. The duties of a visitator are dealt with; there are definite limitations in the power that can be exercised by these various officials according to the particular status of the religious concerned. Not a few of these facts are unknown to many, but this book will amply supply any defect in these matters for those who take the trouble to read it, and there are not a few who would do well to digest its pages. While it is true that nuns can be very exacting and are not devoid of the failings of human nature, it is equally true that there are priests who do not seem to appreciate their needs, which are very real, nor their own duties, which are very serious. The words of the letter of Mgr Brot, Bishop of Marciana, who presided, are very much to the point. 'Je ne saurais trop louer la qualité des conférences. . . . Je suis persuadé que tous les prêtres, qui, à quel que titre que ce soit, sont chargés de Religieuses, trouveront dans ces magnifiques exposés un Directoire sûr pour l'accomplissement du ministère de choix qui leur a été confié.'

DOMINIC J. SIRE, O.P.

AN IDIOM BOOK OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK. By the Rev. Professor C. F. D. Moule. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

This is a wholly delightful and entrancing book. There may be a

handful of readers of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT who know no Greek; but let not these think that they need not notice this book, for it is entirely concerned with the actual wording and phrasing of the New Testament itself. Those who know no Greek at all could hardly follow the arguments; those who know a little, even a very little, could enjoy it without necessarily grasping all the discussion, for the passages discussed are usually translated in the course of the discussion; but everyone who loves the New Testament should know about the book, and should know that it is a valuable book. Professor Moule, the young Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, has put together what he calls 'an attempt to provide a syntactical companion to the New Testament'; it does not profess to be a complete treatise on the grammar and syntax of New Testament Greek, although the contents-page does read very much like the contents-page of North and Hillard or some such textbook of Greek literary style. Under each heading is an almost random collection of observations of Greek idiom as found in the New Testament; sometimes the collection is very complete, sometimes it is not, but it is always fascinating. It is not a book in which we expect to find every example, nor a book in which we can look up any passage which happens to give us pause. But it is a book to read, rather than merely to consult, and after reading almost any chapter we find that our understanding of many passages has been enriched. Each idiom touched upon is studied with a magnificent scholarship, together with a fine reverence for the opinions of other scholars. All the time there is a kind of light-hearted joy in the pursuit of exact meaning, and an infectious zest in the search; a typical statement comes on page 142 after an elaborate analysis of certain *tourneures*: 'it remains to debate some of the elusive and fascinating anomalies, overlappings, and inter-relationships of these groups of ideas'. The precise meaning of language is always 'elusive and fascinating', and we need a companion who really knows the language to help us in the quest. Professor Moule is indeed such a companion. Sometimes he leaves us still with a question-mark, as on page 21: 'Has [the Aorist Imperative in 2 Cor. 13, 12] any significance in contrast to the Present Imperatives which precede it and the Present Indicative which follows it?' The great value of this question is that he has asked it, that he has called our attention to a possible shade of meaning which we might otherwise have missed, and which in this case is hardly patient of translation into any other language. (Incidentally, is this why *Kyrie eleison* is left in Greek in the liturgy, with the Aorist Imperative giving a sense of urgency to the request, as distinct from the general request of the Present, a distinction that no other language can reproduce?) Sometimes there are most interesting observations on the individual styles of the various New Testament writers, particularly with regard to differences between the Synoptics (for

instance, on the use of the Middle or Active Voice in Mark and Matthew, p. 24). All these things help us to get to know more intimately, and so to love ever more, the Sacred Authors, and this is the ultimate value of the book. There are, of course, many things one would like Professor Moule to have told us about: what does he think about the definite article in John 3, 10 (*the teacher*), or what about St Matthew's use (or misuse?) of the word 'Then'? But we cannot think of grumbling when he has given us such wonderful fare and so much to think about, and moreover always in such an enthusiastic way. It is a book one will often go back to. We need hardly add that the University Press has produced the book with unimpeachable grace and elegance.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

LE LIVRE DES ANGES. By Erik Peterson. Préface de Jean Daniélou. Translated from the German by Claire Champollion. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

Erik Peterson is professor of ancient Christian literature at the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology in Rome. Even in French this little book bears the marks of an involved Teutonic style, but the matter is interesting as well as scholarly, and makes a noteworthy addition to the scanty theological literature on angels.

Peterson once again stresses the fact that the liturgy of the Church is an integral part of the worship of God in heaven by the angels and saints; we share in their official mission in the city of God which is praise and worship; and they in turn share in our attempts to honour God by means of the official prayer of the Church. The author demonstrates this by an enlightening analysis of Chs. 4 and 5 of the Apocalypse, of certain passages from the Old Testament and of the Sanctus from the liturgy of St Mark. He gives an account of some interesting passages relating to the angels in the writings of the Fathers, and describes the share the angels were thought to have in the sacraments (especially baptism and the Eucharist), in the Divine Office and in prayer in general. In the concluding section on the angels and the mystical life we may read of our constant spiritual need of the angels who 'show us the great possibilities of our own nature, and of a higher and more intense degree of our own spiritual being'.

Père Daniélou's own more general book on the angels (*Les Anges et leur Mission*, 1951), written after the appearance of the present book in the German original, develops similar ideas more fully.

ELISABETH STOPP