

lems? There are problems, but why emphasize them, why hand them on to religious Sisters and the laity?

We are asked (p. 180) to think 'of the state of soul of a twenty-year-old religious, who passes from a course in freudian psychology at the Sorbonne to spiritual reading from Rodrigues, or from the latest Gœncourt to the recitation of the little office of the Blessed Virgin . . .'. Or of another (p. 182) when her novitiate comes to an end: 'as she has neither her teaching diploma nor her nursing certificate from the State, she is sent to peel potatoes in the bishop's kitchen, or to patch the trousers of the young seminarists in the college sewing-room . . .'. To which this reviewer can but reply, What a foolish young lady! Fancy not finding out beforehand what one is likely to be in for: fancy, even in that case, not thinking over the matter during the novitiate, and quitting before it is too late. The old adage still holds good: Look before you leap. And the reader would do well to have a look at this volume in the booksellers' shop, to see if it is likely to be to his taste, before spending on it twenty-one shillings.

RAYMOND DEVAS, O.P.

THE QUEST FOR GOD. A Study in Benedictine Spirituality. By Dom I. Ryelandt, O.S.B. Translated by Dom M. Dillon. (Herder; 12s. 6d.)

The Benedictines always say that there is no such thing as a Benedictine method of prayer. They mean of course that there is no detailed methodical plan which sets out to lead them by various stages, up the mountains and through the tunnels, to the very highest summits of contemplation. In this sense they are not harnessed to any method, and may choose their way of ascent according to their own individual *attrait*. Some use the staircase, while others prefer to take the lift. But nevertheless, though there is no Benedictine *method* as such, there is a very definite Benedictine *way*, and this study of Benedictine spirituality points out its characteristic features.

The very title of the book is enough to warm the heart of anyone who is familiar with the Rule of St Benedict. Benedictines are taught as novices, and reminded of it all their life long, that the essence of their vocation is not to teach, or to preach, or to write, or even to sing the praises of God in choir (as Suarez thought), but to seek God. And what could be so romantic and so full of spiritual adventure as the quest of God! It conjures up the idea, at least to English readers, of epic endeavour and victory in superhuman contests, and the ultimate possession and enjoyment of the prize. The Benedictine way is essentially to seek God, and the path that leads to him is roughly mapped out in the Rule. The Benedictine is to go to God, through Christ, inspired by the liturgy; chastened by prudent asceticism, and with great joy

and love he is to 'run in the way of God's commandments'. Those are the great sign-posts of the Benedictine way. It is notably christocentric, leading not by abstract mysticism to any clouds of unknowing, but straight through the love of Jesus Christ into the very bosom of the Blessed Trinity. Benedictine spirituality is also characteristically guided and inspired by the liturgy, and one can have no better guide and inspiration, for the liturgy is the prayer of mother Church inspired by the Holy Ghost, and no one can teach a child to pray better than a mother inspired by God.

We are grateful to Fr Matthew Dillon for making this work of Dom Ryelandt's known to English readers.

D.A.L.

**BASIC SPIRITUAL MEANS.** By Philip E. Dion, C.M. (Herder; 32s.)

This book is addressed especially to novices in religion, but is intended for all who are either beginners in the spiritual life or who have found, after some years, that they are making little progress in eradicating vices and acquiring virtues. Fr Dion, an experienced conductor of retreats, shows that lack of progress is often due to want of sufficiently powerful motives, and that these can be developed by mental prayer. The method given for meditations, that of St Vincent de Paul, is simple and may be particularly helpful to those who find the customary 'methods' too complicated. The author then goes on to treat of certain basic virtues, such as obedience and humility, and how to acquire them. The chapters here on abandonment and weekly confession are especially good, while the author's transatlantic style may come refreshingly to young novices who find, as is so often the case, that the best spiritual writers can be somewhat turgid. But while this book is helpful as far as it goes, it is rather limited in approach. The spiritual life, after all, is more than a carefully planned campaign for dealing with vices and virtues. It is a growth in the love of God and union with his Son, and if we truly seek this, the virtues will surely be added to us. Mental prayer, too, is far more important considered as a union with God than as a means to stirring us up to the practice of virtue. The author's continual stress on the will of God is admirable, but it is a pity that he waits until almost the end of the book before similarly stressing that 'without me you can do nothing', and that God sometimes leaves us with our weaknesses until we learn to rely on his strength and not on our own. Those reading the first chapters might be discouraged for lack of this reminder.

D.A.C.-B.