

book are as equally valid for the Christian as for the rationalist. And in those prudently discriminated facts of anthropology, comparative religion and history lies the great value of the book and of others of its kind. The morals of a tribe that lives always in the concrete, hedged in by taboo and magic, may be as spiritual as that of the most highly intellectualised pagan society. And their magic may perhaps prove to be a recognition of the hidden powers of nature controllable by God rather than by man. But what their magic rituals were and how they behaved in relation to their taboos are facts which make a fascinating study for the Christian intent upon discerning the traces and shadows of Christ among all peoples; and, more than that, these facts may tell him of certain natural elements in his own religion which have become overlooked through too much sophistication and consequently made Christian morals more difficult. Thus the Babylonian formulae which were used for repudiation of sins and which Hobhouse describes as 'magical lore' are of great interest to the Christian to compare with his very real sacrament of penance, and from these facts he can begin to discover the natural basis of that sacrament upon which Christ built when he gave the power of the Keys to St Peter. The Christian reader may therefore derive intense interest and considerable help in unfolding his own moral conduct through a study of this book, provided only that he can first detect the assumptions of the author.

Professor Ginsberg in his admirable, new introduction shows also the value of the book to modern students of ethics or moral philosophy, a value which is more evident, perhaps, and which is very urgently required in an age—as the professor points out—when waves of irrationalism have come to undermine the complacent certainty of success in the evolution of human behaviour into a world of 'perfect gentlemen'.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

AUX ORIGINES DES DOMINICAINES ENSEIGNANTES. By Soeur H.-D. Monnier, O.P. Preface by H. M. Féret, O.P. (Editions du Cerf; Paris.)

This book is concerned with the historical origins and developments of the teaching sisters of the Third Order Regular of Dominicanesses in France. Although first and foremost of domestic significance as a Dominican family book (and it will undoubtedly win appreciation from members of that family), it is also of great interest to all students of French religious history with its many vicissitudes. A great deal of painstaking research has resulted in an extremely readable and well-documented book.

The history is centred in the convent of the Assumption at Langres, and falls into three main epochs covering a span of more than three hundred years, beginning in the first quarter of the seventeenth century down to the French Revolution, followed by the period of dispersal,

and issuing in the subsequent revival in 1806 down to the present day.

Of particular interest is the continuity maintained throughout the centuries of what may be regarded as conspicuous features of Dominican religious life. There is the careful blending of austerity with light-heartedness, the insistence on solid reading, study, sound doctrine, together with ample scope for individual formation.

As typical of these Dominican characteristics which are thrown into relief in this book, is the solicitude of the Friars themselves for their Sisters in religion. In his admirable preface, Père Féret remarks on the fidelity of the Sisters to their true *raison d'être*, which is not so much a striving to achieve a reduplication of the régime of the Friars, as to contribute their support to a more active apostolate through an intense life of prayer, both choral and private, in accordance with the ancient traditions of the original convents of Preacheresses. The obverse of this picture is the scene of St Dominic the Founder, who, seated by the enclosure grille, would instruct his daughters in the truths of faith, and minister to their temporal needs, often at the cost of his own sons. That spirit is seen to be still alive in the person of those same sons, down to our own day. As Soeur Monnier indicates in her pages, the Dominican Fathers of the French Province taught and guided their nuns, holding them in esteem as their Sisters and their spiritual daughters as well.

Before the French Revolution these Dominican Sisters were not teaching sisters in the modern sense. They were in fact purely contemplative communities. But at their restoration in 1806, on account of special circumstances, they deliberately decided to devote themselves to the work of education. Nevertheless the unflinching efforts of Mère Angélique and Mère St Benoit to achieve a harmony between integral monastic observance and the more immediate apostolate were crowned with success, as witnessed to by the fervent lives led in these houses.

The publication of this book at the present time seems particularly opportune. Since the late war, in France new and no doubt very necessary and admirable forms of the apostolate are springing up, perhaps to the detriment of the older and more normal types of religious life and work, which modern youth is apt to regard as somewhat outmoded and remote from the needs of our age. This book will counteract such exaggerations by clearly showing that there is a greater need than ever before for Sisters whose lives are dedicated to the work of education. History bears witness, as exemplified in the lives of these Dominican Sisters, that far from impeding the apostolate of education, religious life can be the very mainspring of its efficacy and fruitfulness.

S.M.L.