

a Good Thing. On every page the author states the obvious at some length and usually in well-worn phrases. 'We have only to contemplate and copy this Divine ideal to become, in proportion to our resemblance to it, better men. . . .' That 'only' is nice. 'To hear Mass with devotion we must recall that the sacrifice of the altar is exactly the same as that which was offered on Calvary.' 'The soul who chooses to follow Christ as his guide and model will find his path endowed (*sic*) with everything to illumine, strengthen and encourage him.'

It is all true, glorious and extraordinary, any phrase of it sufficient to give wings to the soul already practised in prayer. But when so many saints have elaborated this eternally wonderful theme, will a repetition in stock phrases really give a lift to those of us who are still thoroughly earth-bound?

ROSEMARY HAUGHTON

APOSTOLIC LIFE. Being the English Version of *L'Apostolat*. Translated by Ronald Halstead. (Blackfriars Publications; 21s.)

Between the covers (cloth) of this book no less than 200 closely printed pages are packed (large 8vo), and the price is 21s.

Now, in the original *L'Apostolat*, this bulk may have been all very well for the immense religious public in France, but, be it noted, as a paper-back, and priced at nothing like 21s. All right in French, perhaps, but not in English—and *such* English. A dispute does not *divert* anyone (p. 42), though it may create quite a diversion. Our Lord did not *moderate* his teaching to anyone's weakness of faith (p. 48): adapted it to, perhaps, or moderated it in consequence of. Such a phrase as 'The majority of we ordinary Christians' (like the translator's numerous *mights* for *mays*) does not read well (p. 131); any more than 'The apostle is utterly faithful' (p. 148). 'These purifications were nevertheless imitations of Christ, who . . .' (p. 159) is a phrase (taken word for word from the French, no doubt), intended to mean that the contradictions suffered by these particular saints were but perfect copies of those of Christ himself, who fulfilled his mission by the failure of the cross. As a last straw, having left many others unmentioned, I can but refer the reader to page 181, where the whole of the third paragraph is reproduced in one long and involved sentence.

All this about the translation, because I have not much to say in favour of the book. It is highly academic, with 'The History of the Development of the word "Apostolic"', in Part I; with 'Canon Law and the Active Religious', in Part II. It is only when Part III is reached that the reader will get something that he expected, where a Carmelite Father writes on 'The importance of the Interior Life for the Apostolate'. But why do so many priests seem to have a passion for prob-

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 Göncourt 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