

prets Picard so sensitively, or because Picard's thought wells up directly from the springs of life—I found *The World of Silence* as fresh in translation as when I first read it in the original. It is a masterly book, reminding one of those masters in the tales of the Chassidim who, by a single sentence or gesture, unite heaven and earth. In fact the similarity to the Jewish teachers strikes one as uncanny, until one realises that Picard shares with them the spirit of *Chessed*, that predominantly masculine spirit (free from sexual overtones) which one looks for in vain amongst so many Catholic books of spirituality.

Picard ranges widely over all those aspects of life which may be clothed in silence, from the movement of animals to the birth of the Word, from the silence of the lover to the achievement of the poet. He moves amongst these archetypal situations with the quiet assurance of the craftsman at his work; the reader feels like a spectator watching the craftsman as his work takes shape and become a substantial part of the world.

I hope that these sentences about Picard's book will convince readers of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* that it is one upon which they can nourish themselves continually, and be strengthened by it every time they return to it. If not, one quotation will give them some indication of its quality:

'What many preachers say about the Mystery of God is often lifeless and therefore ineffectual. What they say comes only from words jumbled up with many thousands of other words. It does not come from silence. But it is in silence that the first meeting between man and the Mystery of God is accomplished, and from silence the word also receives the power to become extraordinary as the Mystery of God is extraordinary. . . . It is true that man is able through the power of the spirit to give an elemental force to words, but the word that comes from silence is already elemental. The human mind has no need to spend itself in giving the word an elemental force that has already been given to it by the silence.'

Picard leaves one wondering whether the silencing of Christians in many parts of the world may not be a warning from God to those of us who have indulged in easy speeches that comfort our cruel hearts. Perhaps the raucous rallies must be dispersed, the silly clever reviews extinguished and our facile words forgotten, before the Word is born again in silence.

DONALD NICHOLL

THE SEMINARIAN AT HIS PRIE-DIEU. By Robert Nash, s.J. (M.H. Gill and Son, Ltd., Dublin; 15s.)

This volume of meditations has been written for those preparing for the priesthood either in seminaries or in religious houses. The author has done well to outline in the Introduction a method, based on that of St Ignatius, for the guidance of those not yet

familiar with the practice of mental prayer. In all there are thirty-eight meditations which give the impression of being rather diffuse. The author however suggests that only one point should be taken each day. To avoid repeating what is to be found in other books for seminarists, Fr Nash does not draw on the Rite of Ordination for his subject-matter, but turns primarily though not exclusively to the gospels. Those who use this book should find in it an aid both to the better understanding of their obligations as students for the priesthood and to progress in the spiritual life.

N. J. KELLY

NOTICES

In *MEN AGAINST HUMANITY* (Harvill; 18s.) M. Gabriel Marcel approaches the problem of human freedom today together with cognate problems from his own metaphysical standpoint, both profound and difficult. He explicitly excludes the religious approach to these problems (p. 88), because he insists that the philosopher must make his own special contribution; and there is no doubt about it that those who can must follow him into these realms to discover the nature of man and the nature of the contemporary attack upon him and in particular upon his spirit.

WIFE, MOTHER AND MYSTIC (Sands; 10s. 6d.) is the story of Bl. Anna-Maria Taigi, told by Père Bessières, S.J., and translated by Fr Stephen Rigby. She was married at twenty in 1790 and reared seven pleasing children, some of whom lived to make depositions at the beatification process of their mother. And her husband too was there to say: 'A year after our marriage . . . she gave up all the jewellery she used to wear and took to wearing the plainest possible clothes. She asked my permission for this and I gave it her with all my heart.' With such a promising family background she developed into a saint who spoke with our Lord and was constantly beset by devils. She was indeed a 'mystic' of the most extraordinary type, and her life was of special significance for the critical period in which she lived. She had a constant vision, a sun in which she followed the life of Napoleon and the evils of the times. The book, though rather jumbled in its plan, is of considerable interest, especially for those who seek holiness in married life. Readers should not be discouraged by the jacket, which gives the impression of 'Another Nineteenth-Century French Nun Beata'!

Desclée De Brouwer have published a French translation of Thomas Merton's *Waters of Silence* under the title *Aux sources du silence* which is pleasantly produced and illustrated with eight photographs of life at Gethsemani.