

Temple is just as illuminating. Peter, after his boastful profession of loyalty in the garden and the ensuing humiliation of the three-fold denial, is a humbler man now and a wiser, who may safely leave to his all-knowing Lord the exact estimate of his love; for him to put it any higher would be to fall back into his old fault of presumption.

Eric Hayman's comments on the teaching of St Teresa of Avila on the 'Our Father' is the subject of my second criticism. St Teresa claimed that in the 'Our Father' the Lord has taught us the whole method of prayer and of high contemplation; but the validity of this claim is questioned on the ground that in her teaching she is drawing upon her own knowledge. Of course she drew upon her own knowledge and I think she would expect us to take this for granted; and it is a well-attested fact that the 'Our Father' was the instrument the Lord used to raise her to contemplation.

There is a useful index; printer's errors, though numerous, are not serious enough to mar the value of this excellent book.

ROBERT HODGE, O.C.R.

CONTEMPLATIVE NUNS SPEAK; presented by Bernard Bro O.P.; Geoffrey Chapman, 30s.

The first reaction of contemplative nuns to the idea of this book will probably be one of antipathy, since nuns in general, though only too willing in most cases to adapt themselves in modern conditions, are suffering from a surfeit of dissertations on the way they should go about it. Their minds, when they try to consider the matter, are afflicted by a confusion of objections to long skirts and ancient customs; by exhortations on the one hand to move with the times and on the other to return to the primitive spirit of the rule.

What a joy it is therefore to find in this book the 'authentic cadence', the deep meaning that makes sense of the cloistered existence, the quest for God which after all is what our lives are all about, whether we are in the cloister or outside it. For the Church, for all those who are inclined to ask 'Why was this ointment wasted?', and for contemplative nuns themselves, Fr Bro has done a great service, with tact and delicacy combined with the clear-cut realism of the Frenchman. His questionnaire, sent to 320 monasteries and convents, brought 1,827 replies from six contemplative orders, touching on many problems—the encounter with God, the rôle of Christ, the influence of the Bible, anxiety for the future, mental distress in the face of divine punishment, the liturgy, the renunciation of human love, etc.

In these replies it is evident that contemplative nuns, far from being escapists, have allowed themselves to be catapulted into a face-to-face encounter with themselves in all their human paucity and with God in his bewildering plenitude. The ensuing conflict on its different planes, in all their periods of light and darkness, pain and joy, richness and aridity is here expressed with vigour, frankness

and a remarkable diversity. That enclosed nuns are not wilting in mental or spiritual apathy or atrophy, still less in regimentation, is more than apparent. There is even one Carmelite who has the happy temerity to disagree in black and white with St Thérèse of Lisieux; and what enclosed nun will not sympathise with the nun who says 'At times of weariness when I wish work and obedience, and the Prioress and the sisters to the devil . . .' Most of the replies come from older nuns as being more realistic in outlook, and interpolated in the relevant places are extracts from the writings of St Thérèse which show, more clearly than many works on the saint, her extraordinary spiritual maturity. The whole has been skilfully classified and edited into what might be called at the risk of an accusation of hyperbole, one of the most surprising 'human documents' of the century. All the more human perhaps because dealing with the spiritual realities which are the only things that make sense of human existence.

Most contemplative nuns will be grateful to the editor for the pertinent and very tactful observation that on the whole their standard of philosophical and theological instruction is not 'sufficiently advanced', and that this is the cause of mental and spiritual distress which could be obviated if the lack were supplied. As some of us are aware, these subjects are hardly so much as 'named among us', and being well-versed in St Paul's *obiter dictum*, 'Women should be silent in the churches', we are glad that someone has drawn attention to the conclusion of the apostle's directive, 'Let them take their place as learners',—with the accent on 'let'. As the editor asks, 'Why should the mistaken attitude of a few towards the feminine intellect deprive these women who live with the maximum of love of the maximum of light?'

In spite of this deficiency Father Bro finds that 'contemplatives can experience and summarize exultantly, and reconcile one with another the most difficult truths which the Church has sometimes taken centuries to define . . .' Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they live closer to reality and to their fellow-men than is generally realized, and in this book their place and work in the mystical body has been triumphantly vindicated.

SR. FELICITY, P. C. C.

NATURE ET MISSION DE L'ÉGLISE, by P. Glorieux; Desclée, n.p.

When a book on the Church, intended as serious, moderately technical theology for both clergy and laity, comes with the recommendation of Cardinal Liénart, it is alarming to find oneself totally disappointed with it.

What we need above all in theology is a profound and thorough exegetical basis. This basis is not merely inadequate in the present case: it is entirely lacking. Scripture is here simply something to be quoted (and, inexplicably, to be quoted as often as not in Latin. How is it possible to see any reason for quoting anything in any language other than either the one it was written in or the one that the reader most naturally uses?). Nor is there any treatment of the Church as the