

which he herein treats'. I am such a one; and in the past, I have derived a great deal of help from reading his previous booklet *The One Thing Necessary*, to say nothing of the value gained from listening to him talk on many subjects; from the Greek and Latin Classics, through his close knowledge of the Fathers, to the last of these great men, St Bernard, he has held me enthralled. His knowledge of these writings is profound, and his love of them deep. He combines the two to give an enthusiasm which is catching in the young man; so that I well remember going off to seek out and read Cassian at his advice, and from there building upon very much the list of recommended reading which appears at the end of his present work.

Therefore, it is with diffidence that I have to write of a considerable disappointment in reading *Seeking God*. True, I have heard it from his own lips before, and therefore it does not come fresh to me. But the disappointment lies in the fact that I believe I have heard it much better expressed, and I do not think he has done justice to himself, and therefore failed to do justice to his theme.

The pattern is very simple, indeed in the great tradition of the Fathers and classical writers on the spiritual life. He draws on the gospels, and he points constantly to the *unum necessarium*. The seeking of God, through prayer, is indeed a seeking through the whole of life, because holiness is wholeness. For this reason, he does not despise the body, but gives it its due place, urging some mortification as a necessary conditioner for a deeper prayer life, but disagreeing with the excessive mortification and bodily penance sometimes practised in the past. While keeping the mind of the reader upon God, he goes through various facets of life, from the lay state to the monk's way, pointing the difference of vocation.

Wherein, then, is the failure in expression? Frankly, it is in this being a completely breathless book. This is explained, to some extent, by his own description of writing it between confessions in a crowded and noisy room in Naples. But the result is a lack of calmness and peace, which should somehow have been transmitted through the noise. Perhaps the greatest single factor which induces this atmosphere is the most peculiar, and often non-existent, punctuation, which for me ruined an experience to which I was looking forward.

MICHAEL HOLLINGS

WE DIE UNTO THE LORD. By Pierre Herbin. Translated by Dom Aldhelm Dean, O.S.B. (Challoner Publications; 8s. 6d.)

The subtitle, *Sickness and Death of the Christian*, is a better indication of the scope of this small book, and as it was the French title it is hard to see why it should have been subordinated to an allusion to

Romans xiv, 8, which few of the readers for whom the book is intended will recognize. The contents are practical advice on the way a Christian should face serious illness and death, and on the duties of his family and friends; simple and fairly obvious, but still, on the whole, commendable. It is unrealistic to recommend the Office of the Dead as a suitable prayer, immoderate to advise a visit to St Séverin in Paris to see how they do Offertory processions: if there is space for that, why deprive the *De Profundis* of its first two verses? On page 70 a line is interchanged with the one which should follow it. But only one sentence calls for serious comment, where it is said that the dying patient should never be drugged to the point of unconsciousness. This should indeed not happen merely to provide a passage to tranquil death, but it would be permissible if the patient were well prepared for death and his pain intense, even if the anaesthetic incidentally hastened his death to some degree: which is a summary of relevant teaching given by Pope Pius XII in February 1957.

THEODORE TAYLOR, O.P.

ST FRANCIS DE SALES: SELECTED LETTERS. Translated with an Introduction by Elisabeth Stopp. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

THE HOLINESS OF VINCENT DE PAUL. By Jacques Delarue. Translated by Suzanne Chapman. (Geoffrey Chapman; 12s. 6d.)

'So sweet was his goodness that people who were favoured with his conversation experienced an intense joy. . . .' Thus St Vincent on St Francis, and a strong impression of this comes down the centuries and through the translation. Dr Stopp has done the work excellently. Although the correspondents of St Francis were people of birth and influence, there were among them many different types and temperaments, from the statesman to the obscure widow, the high-spirited to the timid, and to them all, once he was sure of their resolution, St Francis wrote in the words best suited to move them. We are shown the brief note from a halting place, formal epistles to dignitaries of Church and State, but the selection is made up for the most part of those more conversational letters he wrote to those whom he had undertaken to lead to God. Dr Stopp provides an Index which gives brief biographies of all those who are not anonymous. With this and a longish Introduction, very well written and crisply informative, the letters come even more vividly alive. (Perhaps, though, rather more could have been said about the Visitation and its originality, as a background for the later letters to Visitandines.) The saint comes across clearly, visitating in Alpine valleys, bothered at home by suitors, sometimes ill, always deeply affectionate, writing a brief note to Mère de Chantal to let her know that her son has arrived, watching the