

BLACKFRIARS

to the study of social being "das soziale Sein als solches." Thus he has produced a classic of modern thomistic thought and has given to the thomistic social philosophy all the prerogatives of the *Philosophia perennis*: its value is everlasting, it holds good for all societies and gives the norms that must always govern the relationship between the person (*Einzelmensch*) and society (*Gemeinschaft*) if peace and order are to be restored. The excellent bibliography and index will prove an invaluable guide for an exhaustive study of the fundamental principles of social philosophy. We are deeply grateful to the author for this brilliant example of genuine thomistic thought, and to the publishers who have given to this work that care and craftsmanship with which they have established their world-wide reputation.

BONAVENTURE PERQUIN, O.P.

LES DOMINICAINES DES PRISONS. By M.-H. Lelong, O.P. (Editions du Cerf, Juvisy; 15 frs.)

True religious vocations from among former inmates of women's prisons, even and especially from among those who have served long sentences—this is not a dream but an accomplished fact. The charity of Christ knows no bounds. It has borne fruit in a religious congregation (the Congregation of St. Mary Magdalen, termed "Bethany," of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic) wherein prostitutes and those convicted of the most sensational or merely sordid crimes are completely rehabilitated, and so fused with the community as to live and work absolutely at one and indistinguishable from others who have kept themselves "unspotted from this world" and sacrificed all for the redemption and rehabilitation of their sisters.

This work is quite unlike that of ordinary reformatories, "houses of correction," or refuges for penitents (excellent as these are, each in their own way); and there must be complete eradication of that almost unconscious condescension towards those who have once sinned, be it ever so notoriously; they shall not be treated *as if* they were our sisters, they *are* our sisters, wearing the same habit, living the same rule, genuine vocations. . . . And there is more point to this concept if we bear in mind first, the severity of the French penal code; and then, how it is practically impossible for released prisoners to be reinstated in society: too often all the circumstances seem to conspire towards a relapse into the wonted life of crime.

Père Lelong's admirable little book tells how this work was made possible, of its foundation by the saintly Père Lataste, O.P.; something too of the inner workings of this Congregation in its gigantic work of restoration, healing, expiation; of its necessarily complex organization; of the protracted quasi-postulancy and

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gradual ascent to the novitiate, which forms very subtle stages in the rehabilitation of those whose sin is forgiven but who have an even fiercer struggle than is the lot of most men against the ravages of former sin—a whole gamut of warped inclinations calling for the most delicate and often quite special spiritual therapeutics, but especially for the work of grace. No clogging introspection; instead a steady advance of the will, despite numerous set-backs and failures, along the broad, joyous high-ways of Dominican spirituality.

Few books could have better treated of such *jeux de l'enfer et du ciel*, and of the seemingly general law, often re-enacted—desperate sinfulness as a great jumping-off base in an advance to consummate love of Our Lord. The St. Mary Magdalens, like the poor, are always with us. Père Lelong tells much. Much is untold: *le monde ne le supporterait pas*. The book is steeped in stark realities: purity, and extremes of sin, and innocence restored so as to cause joy to the angels. There are touches of exquisite delicacy: thus nothing in the material dispositions of the community must suggest prison régime—hence no grill to the enclosure; the *réhabilitées* have no family photos (the past must be completely buried), the *réhabilitantes* spontaneously make the same sacrifice so as to be more at one with their sisters. All through there is suggested to us the mysterious triumph of Christian compassion in the face of sinfulness. This book is more engrossing than any novel, and has cathartic qualities; it may even save us from thanking God that we are not as other men are, and certainly from despair, for all through there is re-echoed the French equivalent of those noble words of Walter Hilton: "for not what thou art, nor what thou hast been, beholdeth God with His merciful eye, but what thou wouldst be."

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

A SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS. By Albert Huck. Ninth Edition by Hans Lietzmann, English Edition prepared in conjunction with the above by Frank Leslie Cross. (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen; RM. 3.60.)

THE STUDENTS' INTRODUCTION TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS. By E. Basil Redlich, D.D. (Longmans; 7/6.)

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND AMONG ITS PEOPLE. By Franz Michel Willam. Edited by Rev. Newton Thompson. (Herder; 15/-.)

ABRAHAM. Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins. By Sir Leonard Woolley. (Faber & Faber; 7/6.)

I. The recent ninth edition of Huck naturalized for us; the prolegomena turned into English, English titles added to the