

specific creed and denomination may be, always be aware of the unshakable Truth that in each of us is a Divine spark which can emanate the rays of love and peace if we let it freely develop.

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## (II) NON-CATHOLIC BAPTISM

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**B**APTISM may be doubtful in fact or in law. Even in the case of Catholics doubt may arise about the fact of baptism or of its validity. Not seldom such cases come into the matrimonial courts, either with a view to obtaining a declaration of the nullity of a marriage, or to obtain a dissolution. Similarly a juridical enquiry may have to be made concerning the validity of priesthood or of religious profession, on the alleged grounds of defective baptism. Obviously this is a matter of no little moment for the welfare of souls and for the Church at large. The Church cannot adjust her policy on so grave a matter to placate the injured feelings of those outside her.

In the case of converts awaiting to be received into the Church, experience shows that in the majority of cases it is impossible to ascertain with certitude that their baptism was validly conferred. Due investigations however should be and are made in individual cases. Particular cases cannot be resolved by taking refuge in general abstract theories concerning the sufficiency of non-Catholic baptisms. However, the general discipline of the Church commands that, when there is prudent doubt whether baptism has been conferred at all, or whether it was validly administered, it must be conditionally repeated. (Canon 732.) In this country this enactment is reinforced by a decree of the First Council of Westminster 1852 on the reception of converts. (Decretum XVI, n.7.) There it is laid down that all converts from protestantism must be conditionally baptized, unless there are proofs beyond all question that make it quite certain that their baptism was properly administered. In the Form for the Reception of a Convert reference is made to this decree, and the manner in which conditional baptism is to be given is reiterated.

These are principles upon which we must act, and to say that

by carrying out this practice Catholics are acting as Donatists is just twaddle. Further, there can be no justification for stirring up public opinion in the hope of discouraging the clergy in the performance of their duty. The Church in her teaching and discipline does not rely on public opinion which is Protestant in its conception.

*The points raised in this Comment are dealt with in the Editorial.*



## REVIEWS

MARTHE, MARIE ET LAZARE. Par Thomas Merton. (Desclée; 54 fr. belg.)

LA GRÂCE DE LA PRIÈRE. Par Dom Georges Lefebvre. (Desclée; 48 fr. belg.)

LE DIALOGUE ININTERROMPU. Par Alfons Kirchgassner. (Desclée; 48 fr. belg.)

These three books are about prayer each from a different standpoint, yet all leading to the same conclusions. Thomas Merton's book, which is translated by Juliette Charles Du Bos, considers the distinction between active and contemplative life. St Bernard, whose teaching Father Merton follows, does not make this distinction in the way that we nowadays understand it. It is Father Merton's contention that our modern emphasis on the difference has been so strong that we have set up an entirely false notion of the active apostolic life as something far removed from prayer and contemplation as such, and this has done great harm to the apostolate itself. Thus far he is only saying what many writers have been saying for the past twenty or so years. He now goes on to suggest that the teaching of St Bernard could do a great deal to clear our minds on this subject. And certainly the account he gives of St Bernard's teaching supports this view strongly. St Bernard sets no opposition between the active and contemplative lives: 'Marthe et Marie ne sont pas rivales, elles sont soeurs'. Which, of course, sounds convincing enough until we ask why St Bernard gave contemplation a place of pre-eminence in his teaching and we are told that this is because 'la contemplation ne fait que réaliser en sa plénitude notre union avec le Christ'. What St Bernard is distinguishing is not what men are but what are they doing, how and where they live. Two monks may live side by side and from morning till night may be doing the same things exactly, yet for one the life will be the contem-