

apostolic activity. Their rule is conceived in the fullness of the spirit of St Benedict, yet provides for a contemplative-active life after the manner of St Dominic, both in the world and in the heart of Christendom, fully awake to the tragedy of Christian disunity.

It is a life permeated by a deep humility and self criticism which alone can conquer the Christian arrogance that not infrequently, in all allegiances, unconsciously equates the day-to-day corporate embodiment of religion with the perfection belonging to Christ in his Church but by no means necessarily to his members; making for an attitude of complacent sectarian superiority between divided Christians. This Christian arrogance has be-devilled the relations of Christians to each other down the ages.

It is small wonder that the principles underlying the life and work of the Taizé brethren, here set out by their Prior, are welcomed, not with aloof politeness, but in terms of warmest friendship and commendation, by such differing Christian leaders as Cardinal Gerlier and Pastor Mark Boegner. What Prior Roger Schutz has to say is by way of commentary on extracts from the rule of Taizé which he frequently quotes. Upon the spirituality of this commentary Catholics could profitably meditate, for it has the depth of the best Catholic teaching; it is full of spiritual wisdom and nothing in it will mislead. Anyone so meditating on it would learn much also of the meaning of ecumenism.

HENRY ST JOHN O.P.

THE WELL-SPRINGS OF PRAYER, by Georges Lefebvre O.S.B.; Geoffrey Chapman, 8s. 6d.

ENCOUNTERS WITH SILENCE, by Karl Rahner S.J.; Sands and Co., 10s. 6d.

The little book of Dom Lefebvre is a gentle, meditative work about grace, silence, spiritual sobriety and the fruits of a prayerful life—peace and confidence. It is written with devotion and it is written well; there is nothing exaggerated, nothing lacking in taste; it shows the author himself to be a man of prayer. It is in fact a high class example of the normal and current spiritual tradition. But it is this tradition, despite the fact that it claims to be founded in St Gregory the Great and St John of the Cross amongst others—and in many ways it is—and despite its definite good qualities, that should be questioned. Long ago at the time of its origin it may have been highly salutary—the only saving course to take, and it still has great qualities, but it does seem to be sadly lacking in any real theological or philosophical content; and this ultimately will not do. In recent years, especially on the continent, probably for the first time in centuries, philosophy has become real, truly concerned with living man, making the nature of man—that nature which is perfected in grace—stand out as relevant and significant. Again, in recent years theology has had a re-birth. There is a new pentecostal spirit beginning to blow throughout the Church. The increasing awareness of the significance of the sacraments and liturgy, for

example, as the true structural pattern of the manifestation and communication of the revelation of God through and in his only Son—all this forms the basis of our communion with Christ in his body, the Church. Our human nature and the nature and pattern of God's revelation is the total basis of our spiritual lives, and yet none of this seems to enter into the immediate tradition of spirituality with which we find ourselves. Conditions very similar to the present possibilities are to be found in St Augustine. A genuine theology and philosophy, inseparably welded together, is to be found in St Anselm, in the great Cistercians, and no less in St John of the Cross. Unless it is there, and now surely is the time when it could and should be beginning to show itself, any spiritual writing will be ultimately empty—however nice and true and even necessary its sentiments are—neither really to do with God nor with man.

The Rahner book is of a very different nature. It is not a book about prayer, but a book of prayer. It consists of a series of meditations or addresses to God, in a style which in English at any rate is unfortunately impossible (however successful the original German may be)—'How can I seek you, O distant God, how can I give myself to you . . .' 'O my Soul, never forget the dead . . .' 'O God of my Vocation, let my life be consumed as the Sacred Host . . .' Behind all this is the theology (with philosophy not lacking) for which Rahner has become famous. But I fear that those who are not already to some extent acquainted with his thought will not easily see it here. There is, however, something further lacking in this work. One is immediately tempted, by its form, to compare it with similar passages in Augustine, Anselm and William of St-Thierry. There is that definitely missing which the form, I think, demands. It is too artificial, too calculated. Such prayer essentially needs to be achieved in and through its expression, if it is to convey the living message which must surely be its aim. Rahner's book reads, at least, as if the theory had been worked out beforehand and then later written down. It is certainly something in the right direction, because it contains the elements which we have been demanding above, but, in its English edition at any rate, it fails to reveal the necessary spontaneity. It is a pity that this should be one of his first few books to appear in English, for it cannot help but give a bad impression—or rather, an empty one. At the moment of writing we are eagerly awaiting the imminent appearance of the English translation of *Schriften zur Theologie*.

GILES HIBBERT O.P.

THE CHURCH IN THE DARK AGES, by Jean-Remy Palanque. THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES, by Bernard Guillemain. THE LATE MIDDLE AGES, by Bernard Guillemain. Burns and Oates, Faith and Fact Books, 8s. 6d. each.

These three books cram an astonishing number of facts into a very short space. But they manage to keep purity of style and clarity of thought. Each one is a masterpiece of precision and concision; the French have a gift for combining encyclopaedic knowledge with good taste, and the translation is well done,