

Christianity, an extra added on, as it were, and in no way essential. Rather is the religious community a model of the Christian community as a whole, enriching it and giving it visible expression. It is 'a miniature Church within the Church' according to the Cistercians of the twelfth century. Thus the justification of the religious state is based on the idea of the Church as a community, and of the incapacity of man to attain his proper perfection save as a member of a community. The religious community being an image of the Church, it was a happy idea to begin with a conference on that image which the Church cast before her, the Old Israel. This is given by an acknowledged master of the subject, Father Albert Gelin, known to English readers by his *Key Concepts of the Old Testament*. There follow three essays by a Monk, a Friar Preacher and a Jesuit, on three of the best-known forms of religious life. These all contain much that is valuable, but perhaps the richest of all is the Conference on 'The Theology of the Common Life' by the Carmelite Father Paul Marie de la Croix. All of this requires careful reading and meditation. It will be repaid in full. Dom Juglar on 'The Mass and Office in the Common Life' is quite a mine of early Christian texts, while Father René Carpentier, S.J., has some interesting things to say on the place of religious life in the Church today and the meaning of the Counsels in the modern world. This essay, too, will repay careful study. Dom Feligondes's article will provide evidence of the generosity which French Catholics of today can show if given a lead. Others can do as much. The article on 'Motives for entering the Cenobitic Life', written from the point of view of the psychologist by Dr Rousset, may be of interest to some.

In general the conferenciers are to be congratulated on having sought to make a positive contribution to the subject, and to have kept criticism of certain well-known aberrations of the spirit of religious life to a minimum. In an increasingly critical world, which accepts no institution, however venerable, without demanding the why and the wherefore, they have made a most praiseworthy effort to answer the problems which His Eminence Cardinal Valerio Valeri, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, raises in his foreword. We owe much to them, and to the publishers who have put this excellent series at the disposition of the English-speaking public.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

STARS OF COMFORT. Conferences of Father Vincent McNabb. (Burns, Oates; 15s.)

One wonders how many more spiritual and theological treasures are still hidden away in Miss Finlayson's shorthand notes. Again we express our gratitude for another Father Vincent book. A new book,

a new collection, but in reality an addition to an old collection of his retreat conferences and sermons. It is fourteen years since Father Vincent's death, but those who were privileged to know him can hear his voice again by reading this new series, for the style is of speaking and not of writing; therefore it is much more really Father Vincent. For those who never knew him there is much here to ponder. That was the original intention. The words were spoken to be pondered upon during a retreat. Not pleasant sentimental sermons as might possibly be suggested by the collection title, but strong theology strongly taught. The sayings of our Lord are the stars of comfort, and often enough it is a very different comfort that the worldly-minded would expect. The conferences are not in ordered series as he preached them. They are taken from a variety of times and places. The compiler has introduced an attractive order by grouping similar subjects under main headings—God's call, the way, the means, principles of the spiritual life, etc. One may dip here and there, begin the book at the end, or even break into the middle of a conference and still find purposeful teaching and useful advice. Father Vincent's thought must have been logical and consecutive, but it is often hard to see the argued line of demonstration, a fact which can be ascertained in other notable preachings which have afterwards been set down. The time, the place, the hearers might provide the explanation of the apparent gaps. For all that, no one will complain, because all will be grateful enough to hear Father Vincent's voice again.

DONALD PROUDMAN, O.P.

THE STORY OF A SOUL. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux.

Edited by Mother Agnes of Jesus. Translated, with a critical Preface, by Michael Day, CONG. ORAT. (Burns and Oates; 2s. 6d.)

Fr Michael Day's translation of St Thérèse of Lisieux's autobiography is already well known. This third edition, remarkably cheap for the present day, is to be welcomed, except perhaps for the rather dreadful picture on the cover. Fr Day has written a new Preface, explaining at some length the history of the original manuscripts and of their editing after the saint's death by her elder sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus. While holding that it would have been impossible to publish the unedited originals at that time, he admits that Mother Agnes, in carrying out her sister's wishes, did not, in her manner of doing so, conform to certain generally recognized literary standards. Now that the recent publication of the original manuscripts makes comparison possible, 'it is a matter of regret', says Fr Day, 'that the exact nature of the editorial work carried out by Mother Agnes was not made clear when this edition was first published.'