

such a matter commands our respect, has written that, for them, the treatise on the soul or its equivalent was the keystone of all their teaching on the sanctification of man. It would be too sweeping to say that these leaders of the monastic renaissance left method to take care of itself. But it is true that, unlike those of later centuries, they preferred to give their attention to the soil and the tools of the trade—was there here the perspective of Cassian's first Conference?—confident that if these were studied, the desired fruit would flourish like a natural growth.

They began then with the soul itself. Clearly for Ailred the presiding genius in these reflections is Augustine, and even without the word of Walter Daniel we could judge how long he had browsed on the master of his predilection from the ease and readiness with which he quotes from and alludes to him. Amidst much that will seem to the modern reader merely 'quaint' there is a seriousness in this repeated discussion of the familiar mental trinity, *memoria, ratio, voluntas*, which is a salutary reminder of what a very *Christian* thing the science of the soul is. Although the penny catechism answer to the question, 'Which are the powers of your soul?' is still, 'The three powers of my soul are my memory, my understanding and my will', how far we are from the rich content that these words implied for Augustine and those who fed on him! It was perhaps one of the more unfortunate accidents of history that when a properly Aristotelian psychology relegated the technical use of 'memory' to a sense power, the suggestive if not always definable *reality* to which St Augustine referred tended to get misled. It may very well be that until, in our own terms, we can find it again, we shall never quite overcome the besetting danger of a spirituality that gets disconnected from everything really personal because it cannot reconcile conscious ideals and endeavour with a mysterious development that must be allowed to come from the very roots of our being. It is only too easy, where works such as Ailred's *De Anima* are not regarded as of purely historical interest, for them to become an occasion of archaïcising. For this reason, perhaps, translation into English would not be immediately valuable to an unprepared public. But there is a great call for someone sympathetic with the atmosphere and aims of monasticism, yet aware of all that has happened since houses like Rievaulx swarmed with religious as a hive with bees, to work out by patient prayer and reflection a new synthesis for which many souls would discover they are hungry.

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THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE CONSIDERED IN ITS APOSTOLIC ASPECT. By a Carthusian Monk. Revised and edited by the Prior of Parkminster. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

The Prior of Parkminster tells us in his Foreword that the popularity

of this little book, originally written in French towards the end of the last century, is evidenced by the fact that an eleventh edition was published in 1932. It was translated into English in 1910 and now appears substantially the same, but in a more up-to-date form.

The special purpose of this book was, and still is, to remove a very commonly accepted opinion that the contemplative religious life is in reality a self-centred life, concerned only with the spiritual progress of its members, and to prove that, contradictory as it may seem at first, this life is essentially 'apostolic' in character. 'Although the primary purpose of the contemplative life is the direct praise and love of God', says Fr Eugene Boylan, O.C.R., in his Introduction, 'it may be fairly said that its value for the salvation of souls is at least as great as that of any other form of religious life.' (p. x.) This is an almost too humble claim: it would hardly be too much to say that the value of the contemplative life for the salvation of souls is greater and more effective even than directly active work for souls just because the life is immediately concerned with the praise and love of God. A life lived for God in himself alone must surely necessarily include all his creatures and their welfare. Contemplatives, in fact, may be said to help souls 'through, with and in' our Lord whose 'hidden life' they strive to follow.

This edition follows for the most part the arrangement of the earlier English edition of 1910. But some passages have been re-written to bring the book into line with modern days. Part I deals with the contemplative life in itself; its nature and its necessity in these irreligious and God-less times in which we live.

Part II provides some typical examples of contemplative religious life. Chapter XIII ('Lay Religious') is a new addition and is concerned with a very important aspect of religious life, contemplative or active, namely the life of the order as lived by the lay-brothers and sisters of each community. These brethren and sisters are called 'lay' because, in the first case, the brothers do not enter Holy Orders and in the second case, the sisters are not bound to the Choral Office, like the choir-nuns; both brothers and sisters are chiefly occupied with the material work of the communities to which they belong. But today we try to avoid stressing the distinction between choir and lay members, and to insist rather upon the essential oneness of vocation, and to make it possible for all to share as far as can be in the liturgical life, the community life in general.

It should be remembered that although it has become practically the rule, nowadays, for choir-monks to be ordained priests, this ordination is in no sense essential to monastic life which is a complete vocation in

itself. Formerly, the greater number in a monastic community remained simple monks till the end of their lives, only a sufficient number being ordained for the needs of the community—to celebrate Mass and administer the Sacraments. In at least one Benedictine community, nowadays—that of Prinknash Abbey, Gloucester—permission was given by Rome, while still on Caldey Island, to profess for the Choir certain members who would not go on to the Priesthood. There is quite a number of such ‘non-priest choir-monks’ now at Prinknash and in its dependencies of Farnborough and Pluscarden, as well as ‘lay-brothers’.

In his outline of a representative time-table of life in a Benedictine monastery, the author makes the curious omission of Compline though every other Hour of the Divine Office is mentioned at the special time of day at which it is celebrated. In a future edition of this excellent book the omission might be corrected and it might be of interest to mention a privilege concerning the Choral Office, recently granted by Rome to all Benedictine communities wishing to adopt it. This consists in abandoning the custom observed up till now of celebrating the conventual Mass on ordinary days after Terce, on ferial days after Sext and on fast-days after None and in Lent, celebrating the ferial Mass after *all three* Little Hours. What takes place really, in this arrangement, is that, instead of the Mass being celebrated *after* the particular Office or Offices, it is the latter which are celebrated *before* the Mass—of which the usual time is not at all altered. Hence, these offices are pushed back from their original times (at midday and from 2.30 to 3 p.m.) to the early morning. In the same way during Lent, in order to take the one ‘full meal’ of the fast-day after Vespers as ordered of old, Vespers is pushed back before the time of the meal and the whole of the Office (except Compline) is finished before midday.

The privilege referred to above now allows the Conventual Mass to be celebrated always after Terce—even in Lent. Sext can be recited either immediately after the Mass, or at its real time, 12 midday; None either at midday or, again, at its real time, 2.30 p.m. (‘about the middle of the eighth hour’, says St Benedict in his Rule c. xlviii: Of daily manual labour). During Lent, Vespers may now be chanted at the usual time—afternoon or evening. All this is based upon the principle that it is more in accordance with the liturgical spirit that the Church’s prayer should consecrate the chief moments of the day—sunrise, early morning, midday, afternoon, evening—and so fulfil, as far as human conditions allow, the injunction of our Lord: ‘that we ought always to pray and not to faint’, (Luke 18, 1); rather than by upsetting that order of prayer, in order to preserve a mere memory of the older practice of fasting.

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