

L'ÉGLISE ET LES INSTITUTS SÉCULIERS. By Salvatore Canals; Desclée de Brouwer, 69 FB.

This book is a French translation from the Italian, and its author and subject are introduced in a preface by Fr J.-M. Perrin O.P. The author, Don Salvatore Canals, is a Spanish priest of the secular institute known as the *Opus Dei*, and is the president of the standing committee for secular institutes within the Sacred Congregation for Religious. His book is therefore written with special competence.

'Secular institutes are associations of clerics or lay persons, who, though living in the world, profess the evangelical counsels, and intend to strive for Christian perfection and to devote their lives entirely to the apostolate'. Membership in one of these societies presupposes a special vocation analogous to that of the religious life or of the priesthood.

Before the apostolic constitution '*Provida Mater Ecclesia*', 2nd February 1947, a person who did not belong to a religious order or congregation could not be in a legally recognized state of Christian perfection; after the promulgation of this 'historic document for the inner life of the Church' it has become perfectly possible for a cleric or a lay person living in the world to embrace a state of perfection, not simply in a private capacity, but in forms recognised by the Church and in Institutes which the Church approves. This development in ecclesiastical institutions is not only of juridical importance but indicates the adaptability of the Church to current needs, and is of theological significance. Accordingly Don Salvatore Canals makes his study of secular institutes from the historical, theological, and canonical standpoint. He has relied largely on papal documents, and on the address given by Pope Pius XII in the year 1950.

Those who join secular institutes commit themselves in a stable manner by profession to the three counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, varying according to their particular constitutions, vow, promise, or oath. These pledges are private in character, and do not alter the personal, canonical, and secular status of those who make them. They wear no distinctive habit, and are generally not bound to common life in the same way as this is organized for religious. Their entire life is directed towards the apostolate, but they may still retain their secular occupations. Clerics retain their incardination in the diocese to which they belong, or may be incardinated in the secular institute.

The publishers are justified in recommending this work as the most thorough book of reference on the subject of secular institutes. The need for such a book is indicated by the fact that, within the space of ten years after the publication of the *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, the *magna charta* of secular institutes, no less than 197 associations have made application to the Holy See for approval, of which 49 have been already approved.

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