

THE MEANING OF HOLINESS. By Louis Lavelle. (Burns and Oates; 10s. 6d.)

Fr Bede Jarrett was wont to say that 'the art of perfect living is the art of perfect giving'. It might be more accurate to say that it is the art of perfect accepting, though doubtless Fr Bede's 'giving' included accepting too. We are miserable because we cannot accept. We are impatient with our environment, our fellows and ourselves. To accept the will of God in everything, outside us and within us, is to be made one with him. To be one with him is to be holy.

We shall never accept the will of God in everything unless we see it there first. To see it everywhere is to be a contemplative. Contemplation should support all our passion—and our action, making the first enduring and the latter true.

It is easy then to see why these four studies of saints—St Francis of Assisi, St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Avila and St Francis de Sales—are all about contemplation and action. It is the theme of all human, holy living; but the variations on that theme are infinite. Since the Fall our mind is pulled as it was not before by the world of time and the senses. In and through the Incarnation and the Cross we must try to recover something of that paradise mind-life which was ours at the beginning. Each of these saints recovered it in his or her own way. Louis Lavelle brings out the distinctiveness as well as the similarity of this achievement in 'interiority' in each of the four great personalities he has chosen. And the study of St Francis de Sales is particularly interesting on the distinction between love and the will to love. In this connection he also writes in the first introductory chapter, 'The saint seems most often to be a man of strong will who never ceases to strive and to conquer. Yet we may also say that the saint is less strong-willed than most; for the will is always linked with love of self and is always out for victory and triumph. Now in the saint the will gives way, yielding place to a far more powerful principle of action, which, in return for its docility, will raise it to a higher plane; it yields to love' (p. 7).

This first chapter 'On Holiness' is the best part of the book, though I found the reflections on memory a little obscure. Dom Illtyd Trethowan introduces the book; he is enthusiastic in his praise of Lavelle; it will be salutary for scholastic philosophers to learn from him that they are as useless as logical positivists where the life of the spirit is concerned. But some of them at least will have read and enjoyed the Augustinian and Dionysian interiority of their master in the ninety-fourth question of the first part of the *Summa*. And they will be as appreciative of Lavelle as Dom Illtyd himself. The translation reads excellently.

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