

ALONE WITH GOD, by Dom John Leclercq, with a Preface by Thomas Merton; Hodder and Stoughton, 16s.

THE PRAYER OF LOVE AND SILENCE, by A Carthusian; Burns Oates, 12s. 6d.

This translation of Dom Leclercq's *Seul Avec Dieu: la vie erémétique* seems not to have attracted much attention; yet I should have been inclined to select it as *the* spiritual book of 1962. It is based on the life and teaching of the Blessed Paul Justinian (Giustiniani), d. 1528, founder of the Camaldolese Hermits of the Congregation of Monte Corona. Dom Leclercq develops his theme by means of ample quotations from the holy founder's writings; and in the extracts which he gives us Paul appears as a very attractive and 'undated' author.

Thomas Merton comments in his Preface on the unusualness of a book on an Italian hermit written by a Benedictine monk in Luxemburg and prefaced by a Cistercian writer of the southern United States. It was natural that this translation of the book should first appear in America, in 1961, where the hermits of the original Camaldolese congregation have recently made their first foundation in the English-speaking world. But interest in the solitary life is growing here too, as witness the success of the recently published lives of the Hermit of Cat Island (Fra Jerome Hawes) and the Anglican recluse Fr William Sitt.

To day many lay people are seeking to acquire some degree of interior solitude; and even religious—the vast majority—who live in cenobitical monasteries are 'solitaries' when they are in the retirement of their own cells; so one would think that so attractive a book as this should have a wide appeal. Its very appearance is inviting, it being printed in Gill's Pilgrim typeface, and it seems to be almost wholly free from typographical errors: a matter for gratitude in these days. The American translation reads painlessly, in fact very easily; which may be due in great measure to the care of the English publishers' editorial reviser.

Perhaps if the publishers had added to the book some photographs of hermits and hermitages at Camaldoli, and at Big Sur (adjacent to Henry Miller, who understands so well the value of solitude), it would have attracted more attention. Anyhow, I commend *Alone With God* to readers of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT as a really rather exceptional work of spirituality.

*The Prayer of Love and Silence* is a translation by a monk of Parkminster of *Amour et Silence* 'par un Chartreux', published in 1951 by the Editions de Seuil in their *Vigne du Carmel* series, together with a short treatise on the Holy Trinity in the spiritual life by the same writer.

Somehow, at least in translation, this little book has a rather old fashioned, at times almost Faberish, tone. Still, it contains much pertinent teaching for solitaries and those seeking to live a life of devotion in the world.

Since their foundation at Parkminster in the last century the Carthusians have published a number of valuable translations from French writers of their Order. But could they not now begin to give us the original and contemporary English Carthusian writings which we so much need?

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