

by carrying out this practice Catholics are acting as Donatists is just twaddle. Further, there can be no justification for stirring up public opinion in the hope of discouraging the clergy in the performance of their duty. The Church in her teaching and discipline does not rely on public opinion which is Protestant in its conception.

The points raised in this Comment are dealt with in the Editorial.



REVIEWS

MARTHE, MARIE ET LAZARE. Par Thomas Merton. (Desclée; 54 fr. belg.)

LA GRÂCE DE LA PRIÈRE. Par Dom Georges Lefebvre. (Desclée; 48 fr. belg.)

LE DIALOGUE ININTERROMPU. Par Alfons Kirchgassner. (Desclée; 48 fr. belg.)

These three books are about prayer each from a different standpoint, yet all leading to the same conclusions. Thomas Merton's book, which is translated by Juliette Charles Du Bos, considers the distinction between active and contemplative life. St Bernard, whose teaching Father Merton follows, does not make this distinction in the way that we nowadays understand it. It is Father Merton's contention that our modern emphasis on the difference has been so strong that we have set up an entirely false notion of the active apostolic life as something far removed from prayer and contemplation as such, and this has done great harm to the apostolate itself. Thus far he is only saying what many writers have been saying for the past twenty or so years. He now goes on to suggest that the teaching of St Bernard could do a great deal to clear our minds on this subject. And certainly the account he gives of St Bernard's teaching supports this view strongly. St Bernard sets no opposition between the active and contemplative lives: 'Marthe et Marie ne sont pas rivales, elles sont soeurs'. Which, of course, sounds convincing enough until we ask why St Bernard gave contemplation a place of pre-eminence in his teaching and we are told that this is because 'la contemplation ne fait que réaliser en sa plénitude notre union avec le Christ'. What St Bernard is distinguishing is not what men are but what are they doing, how and where they live. Two monks may live side by side and from morning till night may be doing the same things exactly, yet for one the life will be the contem-

plation of Mary while for another it will be the penance of Lazarus or the business and cares of Martha. 'La vie active dans un monastère peut être aussi une attitude purement intérieure.' In other words, rather than speak of the active and contemplative life *in vacuo*. St Bernard looked at the life in the monastery and found a threefold division—*fratres officiales*, *claustrales* and *praelati*. This is very much the same way as St Paul saw the life of the Church: 'there are diversities of graces but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord.' In fine, there is no true active vocation without a contemplative life behind it. It is true that this amounts to no more than many spiritual writers have been saying for some years past, but for this generation at least it is a fresh and lively way of presenting a very important truth.

Father Henri de Lubac writes a preface to *La Grâce de la Prière* in which he warns us of misinterpreting the teaching as Quietism. This is the danger that must beset any work of advanced spirituality; Dom Georges Lefebvre avoids this danger successfully by keeping before our eyes the two fundamental principles that Jesus Christ must be the centre of our prayer and that prayer is primarily a state of will. In one sense prayer might be seen as a kind of balanced poise—'toute âme sanctifiée est une présence de Dieu'—but submission does not imply blind inactivity. Rather, true prayer is a combined operation: 'Notre prière n'est pas notre oeuvre à nous seul: Dieu travaille avec nous'.

Le Dialogue Ininterrompu looks as it were at the other side of the picture and the author is anxious to avoid prayer turning into a monologue. 'Lorsque je prie j'essaie de trouver une parole qui me relie à Dieu.' The danger here is of turning prayer into a feverish business and I may become so occupied with looking for the word that I shall not be able to see the wood for the trees. How easy this is we all know; the words can so easily deafen us to the Word. So we are reminded of a few simple truths which may help to keep the balance in our attention. It is not so much that I ought to be for ever hunting for ways of approaching God, but rather God never ceases to offer himself to me if only I would leave the way open for him to reach me. And such picturesque, and telling, ways there are of putting this truth in French: 'prêter l'oreille et me hisser au niveau de la parole de Dieu'. This book offers us a series of brief considerations which will help both to keep this central truth firmly in mind and to sharpen our hearing for the voice of God.

It is well that these three books should all be read together so as to give encouragement to those many people there are in the world who in the most ordinary everyday callings are granted the gift of true prayer and union with God.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.