

REVIEWS

THE HOLY RULE FOR LAYMEN. By T. F. Lindsay. (Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

The author's quotation from Dom Delatte to the effect that St Benedict 'conceives monastic charity under the form of a regular, normal and tranquil development of the graces of baptism' can provide a basis for this book. As the monastic life is merely the perfection of the Christian life, lived in a certain framework of observances and exercises, there must be much in the monastic life which will be of use to those seeking perfection in the world, and even some of the monastic exercises can suggest to such people analogous practices suited to their own circumstances.

Accordingly, one finds in the book a sketch of the main points of St Benedict's spirituality—his insistence on obedience, humility, the family spirit, recollection; his teaching on prayer—and suggestions about such material details as manual work and the best time to say the office. No doubt oblates will be glad of the assistance thus offered them in viewing the Christian life in theory and in practice from a Benedictine angle.

The fact that instead of observing literally a rule made specially for him the oblate applies the rule of St Benedict itself to his own conditions, so far as the spirit is concerned, should safeguard him from formalism, but it also creates difficulties. A notable one is that whereas the Benedictine life is essentially cenobitical, a common search for God by a group whose members stand to one another as the members of a family, the oblate of necessity stands alone. He belongs, of course, to various societies—family, state, professional group and others—but with none of these can his relations be those of a monk with his monastery. It is true that the Christian family comes nearest to the monastic society; yet one cannot expect oblates always to come from Christian families or, if they do, to be allowed by modern economic conditions to live in close contact with them. And though the virtues of obedience and humility can be developed in any society the positive aid, instruction, example and encouragement found in a religious community are not to be sought in any other group. The oblate must surely try to replace the *fraterna acies* of the monastery by artificially cultivated relationships with other people who pursue the same ends as himself.

Mr Lindsay stresses the acceptance of those means of sanctification which come from the non-religious societies. It would be interesting to hear him on the positive search which, it would seem, the oblate must make if, not being a cenobite materially, he would be one spiritually.

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