

instance. I liked his article very much. But, on sober reflection, what is it but another 'bind'? No solution is offered. Caryll Houselander wrote that long book on *Guilt*. I read it, and being an active rather than a contemplative, I analysed her concluding chapter. It offers no help, except to the odd person who has been thinking along the same lines and therefore could do without it anyway.

Perhaps this letter is only another bind. That would be too bad, for *The Life* always does me good, and I look forward to seeing it.

G. A. BADENOCH, M.D.

## PERFECTION

DEAR SIR,

All this talk about perfection worries me. I am quite sure that most of that rather sinister artificiality that is too often evident in devout persons arises from the bad habit of seeking perfection. It has been my privilege to help, or to try and help, monks and religious of all Orders and in many different countries, and it has been my experience that many nervous crises, and many of the tragedies that happen from time to time in monasteries and religious houses are due to this misguided desire for perfection which is too often a cloak for a subtle kind of self-seeking and lack of generosity. Perfection is as various as human nature and it comes to those who seek God with their whole hearts. It is an effect of union with God. I once read an article by a monk (I am not sure it was not in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*) in which he spoke of the monastery as a school of perfection. This may be true of some post-reformation monasteries, but Saint Benedict's idea was that it should be a 'school of the service of God' and he does not require of his novices that they should seek perfection but that they should seek God. In a wonderful phrase he says of the monk who has been ordained a priest that he should not be puffed up by the honour conferred upon him but that he should 'magis ac magis in Deum proficiat'. No one comes to the Father save through the Son and the monk finds God through the common life of his monastery which is for him the life of Christ. This requires an enormous generosity, but then the price of the treasure hidden in the field has always been all that we have got. Ultimately it comes to discretion which is surely nothing else than a very clear distinction between means and ends.

BRUNO S. JAMES