

if these authorities had not been available, he would have dared to place his standards even as high as he has. Having listened to many conversations after Clergy Retreats and Days of Recollection, I can assure the author and others who are easy on seculars that seculars are not grateful. The greatest obligation to sanctity comes from the priesthood which we share in common, not from the religious state. When writing on the inner life, and the means of attaining it, Father Boylan needs no authorities: he is himself an authority.

In his remarks on studies and the rosary, there is a curious inconsistency. Arguing from Canon 129 he maintains that because the Code enjoins it, study for a priest is the will of God and therefore 'no matter what opportunities of doing good a priest may pass over' in order to study, by studying he is doing something 'much more . . . holy and apostolic'. Apparently, however, the same argument does not hold in regard to the rosary, for although he refers to Canon 125 he makes no attempt to argue that therefore to say the rosary every day is the will of God also. He binds the priest to no more than 15 decades a week, a decade each morning and evening, more or less, and even that 'one should not be afraid to say walking or moving about'. Had the author been writing before 1916 he would not have bound the priest to any recitation of the rosary whatsoever, if he preferred the Little Office. This would have been surprising in view of the many papal encyclicals on the importance of the rosary. There is something too subjective here.

The book would be greatly improved if the chapters giving practical counsel were omitted and other chapters giving the fundamental obligations of the priestly state and the ways of achieving them were included and the ends tidied up by discarding the magazine-technique.

In spite of its defects, this book has much to commend it, particularly the chapters on the inner life and the references to works where points raised could be studied more fully.

The better is often quoted as the enemy of the good: here is a case where the good is the enemy of the better.

TERENCE TANNER.

SAINT BENEDICT: HIS LIFE AND WORK. By T. F. Lindsay. (Burns Oates; 10s.6d.)

When this book came to me for review I had to choose whether to read it as another life of St Benedict and critically to compare it with its predecessors, or to let it introduce me for the first time, as it were, to the founder of Western monasticism. Since the publishers assure us that it is 'admirably suited to the general reader, whether Catholic or non-Catholic', I chose the latter alternative, and it is therefore as a general reader that I attempt to discuss it here.

Taken as a whole, be it said at once, Mr Lindsay achieves what he set out to do. It is no easy task to write a biography which will be interesting whose subject is so far removed from us in time and about whom material is so scanty as St Benedict. Mr Lindsay's style is facile and readable, and so one is all the more irritated when he interrupts his narrative in order to make lengthy quotations from previous writers—the *Rule*, of course, and St Gregory the Great always excepted. Indeed the mention of certain past controversies is somewhat puzzling to the general reader as they do not materially affect the story, and the author, as often as not, refrains from taking sides. Those, in particular, which arose out of the publication of Abbot Chapman's famous book are given of the publication of Abbot Chapman's famous book are given great prominence, whereas another more recent, and still acute, controversy is not even echoed in this book.

Instead one would perhaps have preferred more information as to the connection between modern manifestations of Benedictinism and the *Rule* of St Benedict. It is hard at times to see how so many different kinds of monastery—not to mention so many different kinds of monk—could all have had their origin in the Monte Cassino of the sixth century. Benedictine monks do not emerge from the noviciate cast all in a single mould. Yet, as Mr Lindsay points out, all the main streams of Benedictine activity are traceable from the beginning.

The statement that 'there may have been a priest or two at Subiaco, but we do not hear of them; it is not until much later that we find Benedictine choir-monks becoming priests almost as a matter of course' (p. 74) calls for some explanation how such an obvious element of monastic life today had its origin. I suggest that the key to the problem has been given in Christopher Dawson's Gifford Lectures 1948-1949. It is of the fusing of St Benedict's ideal, as we see it in the *Regula Monasteriorum*, with that of other great saints and thinkers, particularly St Augustine, that was born the Benedictine Order. Here are Mr Dawson's words: 'St Augustine was himself a monk as well as a bishop, and one of the creators of the Western monastic tradition. For it was he more than anyone else who was responsible for that combination of the monastic life with the priesthood which ultimately became one of the distinctive features of Western monasticism. . . . Monte Cassino itself was destroyed by the Lombards about 581, and the monks were forced to take refuge in Rome. But such catastrophes did not weaken the spirit of the Rule; on the contrary they brought the Benedictines into closer relation with Rome, and with St Gregory, through whom St Benedict and his Rule acquired their worldwide fame and their new apostolic mission to the barbarians in the far West. For it was at Rome that the Benedictine tradition became combined with the Augustinian tradition of a clerical monasticism and with the liturgical traditions of the Roman monasteries which were respon-

sible for the performance of the liturgical offices and the music of the great basilicas.' (*Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, pp. 50, 52.)

Undoubtedly the picture which a general reader would form for himself of St Benedict would be that of a great educator. From the first words of the prologue to his *Rule* we find ourselves in a scholastic atmosphere. He tells us that it is his intention to found a school; and right through to the last page practically every word he writes testifies to his qualities as a teacher. His deep insight into human character and the motives for human behaviour: his love for those committed to his charge: his gentleness in bearing with their weaknesses and failings: even the so-called 'penitential' he drew up for dealing with the wayward: all bear eloquent witness to this important element in the personality of St Benedict. The modernity of his approach to delinquency (see for example chapter twenty-seven of the *Rule*) would interest the psychologist. 'Nothing is to be preferred to the love of Christ. The claims of charity are paramount, and Christ is to be found in the needs of all those who seek us in His name.' It is a pity, one is tempted to add, that every monk cannot be an abbot so that 'while correcting others by his admonitions, he will be himself cured of his own defects'.

On p. 52 Mr Lindsay says that St Athanasius had himself translated into Latin the *Vita S. Antonii*. Surely the translator was Evagrius of Antioch? It may be regretted too that this life of St Benedict is not illustrated. Some reproductions of paintings, such as the one on the wrapper by Meister von Messkirch, would have enhanced an otherwise well produced volume.

DESMOND SCHLEGEL, O.S.B.

SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis & Carter; 8s.6d.)

There is scarcely a Catholic review, German, French, English, Canadian, American, which has not in the past year offered its meed of praise to the young Cistercian monk, the author of this book. Anglican papers such as *The Church Times* have vied with their Catholic contemporaries in showing their appreciation of his work. The sales of his books prove that the reviewers are voicing the public thought. What then is the appeal of such a writer to the modern public? What is the secret of such sudden and phenomenal success in the publicising of contemplative prayer, which is the theme of this book and which as a rule appeals to so small an élite? It is not that he has a profound or closely reasoned theology of spiritual matters to offer to the perplexed world. He expressly condemns the man who attempts to share the knowledge of contemplation and promptly becomes involved in theological discussion and controversy (p. 186). Thomas Merton was scarcely ordained priest when he wrote this book—written shortly after his *Elected Silence*—he had just completed a course of philosophy and theology