

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE. By Julianus Pomerius. Translated and annotated by Sr Mary Josephine Suelzer, Ph.D. (Ancient Christian Writers Series; Newman Bookshop Westminster, Maryland; and Mercier Press, Cork.)

THE LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT. By St Augustine. Trans. by Very Rev. John J. Jepson, S.S. Ph.D. (Introduction and Notes by the Editors. A.C.W. Series. Mercier Press, Cork; 15s.)

The series of *Ancient Christian Writers* keeps its high standard. The publication of an English text of Julian Pomerius's treatise is an enterprising addition. The book was written in Gaul in the second half of the 5th century by an exile from Africa, deeply influenced by St Augustine, and having an audience of clerics in mind. Priests especially will find much in it of value, though there are sections about action and contemplation (Bk. II), and about virtue and vice (Bk. III)—especially in the passages on pride and the passions—of wider interest. St Augustine's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount will be generally welcomed. It would perhaps be preferable if the editors gave, in works of St Augustine, a full translation of the relevant *Retractions* rather than summaries in the notes. The latter, and the introductions to both volumes, are as satisfactory as in previous volumes in the series. The introduction to *The Contemplative Life* gives as full an account of its author as is possible at present. Attention should be drawn to the fact that volumes in the series are now issued by the Mercier Press by agreement with the American publishers.

A. R.

THE MAN NEAREST TO CHRIST. By F. L. Filas, S.J. (Dobson; 12s.6d.)

This book is obviously the outcome of much painstaking and methodical work on the part of the author, an American Jesuit. In his first section he deals with the life and character of St Joseph as portrayed in the Gospels and the apocrypha. The information one gleans from the New Testament concerning St Joseph is sparse, and it was but natural that attempts should be made in the first centuries of Christianity to expand and develop the gospel story. But after an examination of the apocrypha (Fr Filas gives extensive quotations), one returns thankfully to the factual and sober account of the evangelists. The pious frauds of the apocrypha, the fantastic embellishment and absurd claim of miracles would make a Hollywood producer blush.

The early Church being much preoccupied with defending Trinitarian and Christological dogma, the devotion of Christians to St Joseph, whilst always existing, was not outstanding. Fr Filas in the second half of the volume outlines the growth of devotion to the foster father of Christ. Here we are given first an account of the development of the devotion up to 1550, and secondly from

the Council of Trent until the present day. Mention, of course, is duly made of the part the Society played in propagating the devotion. The book is rounded off by a number of papal documents (thoughtfully translated) relevant to St Joseph, by a comprehensive enumeration in chronological order of all papal documents from 1479, and by an accessible reference table and index. In this book Fr Filas makes a helpful contribution to the fuller appreciation of the foster father of our Lord. Data from many and different sources have been collated (on this score alone the book meets and fulfils a longfelt gap); altogether a highly acceptable account of devotion to St Joseph.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, O.P.

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (S.C.M. Press; 9s.)

This book might be not unfairly described as an attempt to analyse the nature of the Christian life, in the light of certain essential texts in the Synoptic Gospels, and to seek the development in the Epistles of St Paul. It is significant that St John is left out of the account. The author, of whom an interesting Memoir is given at the beginning of the book, was executed at a Concentration Camp in Germany on 9 April 1945. He was one of a group of brave men who deemed it their duty to work for the defeat of their own country, who considered it less important that Germany should be defeated than that Christian civilisation should be destroyed. It was a terrible choice for a true patriot to make, but it was a choice entirely in harmony with the uncompromising Christianity displayed in these pages.

For a Catholic the main value of the work will lie in its genuine moral insight and its unmistakable sincerity. However remote such a distinction as that here made between 'cheap' and 'costly' grace may seem, from the methods of Catholic theology, we can recognise and accept the moral doctrine which arises out of it, even though our expression and our emphasis would be slightly different.

We are sorry however that this book should show so little understanding of the 'Catholic mind'. It is not true that the distinction between precept and counsel implies a 'double standard' *tout court*, and a small exercise of Christian patience is called for when we find Monasticism and a 'flight from the world' still being coupled together. Even more disturbing is the phrase 'The essence of Christian prayer is not the vague adoration of mysticism'. No doubt time would have eliminated these defects in a soul as sincere and truth-loving as Pastor Bonhoeffer; but time was denied him, and in his heroic death he has surely passed to the Vision in which all problems are resolved.

R. VELARDE