

era. It is an era in which all Christians have a great mission to the world, in obedience to their Christian calling. Every activity of man comes under God; and, if man has forgotten this, it is largely the fault of Christians, who too often have forgotten their duty to the world in which they live. The men who must be brought back to God are not a mass of isolated individuals, who are to be individually won over. Each individual is involved in a network of relationships which have become part of their very selves. To influence them we must influence the relationships, the society, in which they live.

Traditional Christianity has tended to be escapist. It has either tried to escape from society into God, or to escape from God into society. To win over the world it must remain attached vertically to God and horizontally to the society around it. God is the God of society, and everything in it. He is the God of history, even of Communist history. The Christian's duty is to proclaim his faith here and now, i.e. where and when God gives him the opportunity. We must be filled with an even greater messianic sense of mission than the Jew, Karl Marx, and his Russian followers.

It will be seen how Mr Max Warren takes as the thesis of his book, and applies to the mission field, the principle of the Abbé Michonneau, that it is especially the Church's work in our modern world to bring back Christianity to the community, and not to rest content to look after the pious Catholics who come to Mass, together with the comparatively small number of individuals on the fringe. Many of our modern Catholic Action Societies have seen the same principle, and they are organised to influence the community. We must not succumb to the temptation to make them 'parochial'. No one can read these books—especially that of Father Michonneau—and fail to recognise that the world mission of Catholics is of the utmost importance, that it is part of the obedience we owe to our Saviour, and that we should support any society which, with the Church's blessing, can make any contribution towards this result.



## REVIEWS

### Religious and Contemplative Life

LA VIE PARFAITE. By Dom Jean Leclercq. (Editions Brepols; 45 Bel. francs.)

The important part of the title to this book is its subtitle 'Points de vue sur l'essence de l'état religieux'. It does not set out to give an all-round treatment of the religious life, but rather to discuss certain aspects which, in the opinion of the author, have in recent times been left out in the cold. He has written a truly original book.

I must admit that the first part startled me on first reading; but Dom Leclercq proves his point from tradition. He explains that traditionally the religious life is 'angelic' in the sense that it resembles the life of angels; he goes on to say that it is like that of the prophets of old. Then he explains how it is 'apostolic', using the term not in the sense of missionary, but because it is apostle-like; for the apostles left all to follow Jesus. It is at this point that the book has its richest vein. The author undoubtedly enlarges one's appreciation of the religious life, and from the principles he enunciates, many problems of the Holy Rule are clarified. Why for instance are monks most carefully warned by St Benedict not to murder or to steal? Read this book and you will probably find the answer.

COLUMBA CARY-ELWES, O.S.B.

ST BENEDICT AND HIS TIMES. By Ildephonse Cardinal Schuster, translated by Gregory J. Roettger, O.S.B. (B. Herder Book Co.; 45s.)

LE SENS DE LA VIE MONASTIQUE. By Louis Bouyer. (Editions Brepols; 85 Bel. francs.)

The two works under review, though their themes are related, differ greatly alike in subject-matter and in treatment. The first deals with the life and historical background of a single great monk, the greatest influence in western monastic history; the second deals not with the history of monasticism but with the spiritual doctrine which underlies it; and the doctrine given does not rest exclusively upon the Benedictine tradition. Indeed, for the greater part it is a statement of the theology of the Christian life as such; and where it deals with specifically monastic doctrine, it owes as much to the Fathers of the Desert and to more recent Eastern monasticism as to St Benedict.

After the tragic destruction of Monte Cassino in 1944, the greatly venerated Benedictine Cardinal Schuster published the work of which this is the American translation, in a splendidly produced and illustrated edition to be sold on behalf of the restoration of the ancient abbey. Cardinal Schuster's wide knowledge of the history of early canon and civil law, of the liturgy and of Italian ecclesiastical history between St Benedict and St Gregory, gives its principle interest to the book, in its interpretation both of the Rule and of the Second Book of St Gregory's Dialogues. Not all the parallels brought forward will be equally convincing to the critical historian; the great strength and charm of the book will be found in its monastic spirit, and in the profound *pietas* which it breathes towards St Benedict and towards Monte Cassino.

Père Louis Bouyer, priest of the Berullian Oratory, is already well known in England, both by personal contacts and by his profound