

prayer, for example, with its advice that if distractions at prayer are voluntary, stop them, or that priests should not do odd jobs like opening the window or stoking the fire while saying office, gives the impression that here is a man writing who really is speaking from experience; a man who first sees faults in himself and then having seen them in others wishes to advise not because he condemns others but because he does wish to help them.

MICHAEL PLATTS, O.P.

LES INSTITUTS SÉCULIERS DANS L'ÉGLISE: DOCTRINES ET RÉALISATIONS ACTUELLES. (Bonne Presse; n.p.)

CONSECRATION À DIEU ET PRÉSENCE AU MONDE: LES INSTITUTS SÉCULIERS. By J.-M. Perrin, O.P. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE IN THE WORLD. By A. M. Goichon. Trans. M. A. Bouchard. (B. Herder and Co.; 32s.)

Any consideration of the secular institutes must now start from the pontifical documents by which they have been constituted and encouraged. These are the apostolic constitution, *Provida Mater*: the motu proprio, *Primo feliciter*: and the instruction, *Cum Sanctissimus*. The first book here reviewed, after an excellent ten-page introduction, gives the three documents in a French translation and adds a short allocution of Pius XII to one of the more important institutes. The remainder of the book, rather more than half, is a guidebook to institutes that already exist, cataloguing them by their state of development, that is those that have papal, those that have diocesan approval, and those which hope soon to achieve at least the latter. In all, sixty-five are listed, each with a short history, description and the address of the principal house or director. This is very useful, even if some of the descriptions have the serene optimism of the brochures advertising seaside resorts. The catalogue is not complete, but it could not be expected to be: this crop is still fermenting, it is not all bottled yet.

Fr Perrin gives both the Latin and the French of the first two papal documents. These are prefaced with rather more than a hundred pages in which he sets out the spiritual teaching of the documents in a firm framework of theology. The twin ideas of the title—consecration to God and presence in, penetration of the world—are excellently if briefly worked out, and the point (of great importance) made that the secular character of this new form of Christian living determines not only the apostolic but the interior life of its followers. The section on the role of the evangelical counsels is too brief: even though this is determined largely by the character and directives of the individual institute, some general rules of adaptation can surely be expressed. One is glad to note too that among the elements necessary in the formation

given to its members by an institute he mentions the doctrinal: this could be emphasized; the further an individual member is from a detailed rule and an ever-present structure, the greater is the necessity that he should possess a sane and strong theology, deeply held and deeply understood.

Mlle Goichon, a member of the third order of St Dominic, evidently possesses such a formation though her rather Sibylline writing does not always do it justice. The theological portions of her book could be briefer and clearer. She is not in fact writing for members of a secular institute but for all those who wish to lead a contemplative life in the world. Much however of what she says, especially in the third chapter, on the conditions and the means of such a life, will be of considerable value to members of those institutes which lay stress on a contemplative side to their vocation. Here, where she is plainly speaking from experience, an experience meditated on in the light of scripture and theology, she carries conviction, both in regard to the possibility of such a life (the difficulties are only short of unsurmountable), its value in itself to the Church, the re-assessment of traditional means involved and practical suggestions for its organization. She draws often on St Thérèse of Lisieux for spiritual advice; it seems strange that she does not once mention Sister Elisabeth of the Trinity, whose simplicity of prayer one would suppose to be of almost equal value to those whose time is likely to be narrowly limited.

The first two books are paper-backed and should not be too expensive: the third is too expensive and could be paper-backed, it would then be cheaper and the good things in it available to more people.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

A NEW QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS. By James M. Robinson. (S.C.M. Press; 9s. 6d.)

The expression 'The quest of the historical Jesus' has become familiar to us as the English title of Albert Schweitzer's book, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*. Schweitzer was concerned with the problem 'What can be known of Jesus of Nazareth by means of the scientific methods of the historian?' 'The so-called historical Jesus of the nineteenth-century biographies is really a modernization, in which Jesus is painted in the colours of modern *bourgeois* respectability and neo-Kantian moralism', wrote Schweitzer, and forthwith presented us with a reconstruction of Jesus which he regarded as objective simply because it lacked the Victorianism of the classic lives of Christ.

In reaction against this positivist approach to the new testament, the existentialist school, of which Bultmann is the leader, regards the