Life of the Spirit

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EDITORIAL

'A CHALLENGE from the cloister', which appeared in the May issue of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, was taken up vigorously from the other side of the grille. As may be seen from this correspondence, the apparent disagreement between those seeking cloistered perfection and the others who look for perfection or contemplation in the world is sufficiently common and deep-seated to demand a thorough investigation. For the disagreement must certainly be apparent only, and not real. The one life of perfection and contemplation must in the end be the same for all, as the purpose is the same (the beatific vision in heaven) and the means are the same (the life of Christ conveying grace to the individual through the Church and the Sacraments). Whether a man is called to enter the cloister, or to enter the ecclesiastical state, or to live with his family, he is called by our Lord to follow him. Our Lord, the model for every Christian, was himself the perfect and yet the ordinary man. For various reasons he held no official status in the Jewish religion nor yet in the civil organisation of the day. His supreme status came from his hypostatic union, but apart from that he was 'the carpenter's son'. So these different ways of Christian life traverse the same terrain and follow the same point of the compass.

The present issue may help to show this fundamental unity. Although it treats of various aspects of the state of perfection, from the chief example in the office of a bishop to that of monks and friars, it reveals throughout that the 'state' only spotlights the essential features of the follower of Christ. Read from this point of view, it should prove of value to those on both sides of the fence who are anxious to discover the relation between cloistered virtues and those at large.

The essential differences between religious life and the Christian life in the world have still to be made clear, at least to many readers; but it is important to lay the sure foundation of the essential unity in the life of Christ, the perfect and the ordinary man.

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