

From this point of view Mgr Knox's great work has one great weakness: it is not really theological. He traces the phenomena (and indeed his choice of data, while being too inclusive, serves up excellent fodder for his caustic wit, for which he is renowned); but he gives no fundamental explanations of that phenomena. For example, it might have been more valuable to trace the streams of thought that have sprung up into 'ultra-supernaturalism'. Surely the long tradition of neo-platonism with its puritanical and angelic tendencies might have accounted for a great deal of the phenomena. And with that criterion Mgr Knox could have excluded some of the less reputable members of his caste—and with advantage. There still remains a need to show the source or sources of 'ultra-supernaturalism' in order to classify the dangers. Once classified, they might be more readily detected and prevented.

Mr Cragg's book makes an excellent contrast to *Enthusiasm*, for he is writing of that period in England round which Mgr Knox centred his investigations. But Mr Cragg is out to show the reaction at the Restoration period from the enthusiasm of the puritans, a deliberate avoidance of the dangers of excessive supernaturalism. But such reaction provided another moral, for it led to a very un-supernatural view of divine truth and ushered in the modern era, which is here shown with skill and erudition to have its roots in a retreat from enthusiasm.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

SERMONS ET OPUSCULES SPIRITUELS INEDITS. By Richard of St Victor.

Vol. I. L'Edit d'Alexandre ou Les Trois Processions. Latin text edited with French translation, introduction, etc., by Jean Chatillon, W.-J. Tulloch, J. Barthélemy. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

The importance of Richard of St Victor in the history of spirituality can hardly be over-emphasised, though it is only of late years that this has come to be realised. It is strange that after an immense influence over the writing and mysticism of the middle ages he should have become eclipsed by subsequent writers. He was probably born in England in the twelfth century, and his writings did a great deal to inspire the English mystical writers of the fourteenth; but Hilton is known and Richard remains merely a name and a tradition. It is therefore a welcome event that his works are now being critically edited in Paris, and it is to be hoped that this example will soon be followed in England. The 'Edict of Alexander', about which there are two discourses, may have been a commentary on the first words of the Christmas Gospel about the edict of Caesar Augustus, but it is only an excuse to describe some aspects of the passage from the active to the contemplative life and to introduce the three liturgical pro-

E

cessions of Candlemas, Palm Sunday and Ascension. The rest of the text shows admirably the manner in which a mystical writer can build on a liturgical function and reach to the heights of the spiritual life thereby. The processions are each one of them conducted in company with our Lord, since they have their origin in our Lord's own movements in the Gospels. The procession of candles in honour of the Purification of our Lady is particularly fruitful. 'We light our candles when we have need to look for something in the more hidden and obscure places in our rooms. We have to ask for the light of deep and thorough investigation in order that things hidden in darkness and the designs of the heart may be made manifest, cleansed, purified.' So we carry lights to shine in the dark recesses of our hearts and to accompany our Lady and her Son to make their offering in the Temple. The treatment of the symbolism of the Scriptures and liturgical functions is somewhat tortuous to the modern way of considering the spiritual sense, but the method unearths some very pleasing and illuminating aspects of interpretation.

JOHN CORSON

L'OBÉISSANCE ET LA RELIGIEUSE D'AUJOURD'HUI (Editions du Cerf; and Blackfriars) is the latest volume in the series which began with *Directoire des Supérieures*, now translated as *Religious Sisters*. Each volume is the fruit of a conference of a group of French clergy under the direction of *La Vie Spirituelle* designed to help the cause of the vocations of religious women. On the occasion whence sprang this book they had chosen a subject which is the corner stone of religious life and the one which needs to take all the strain of the change in modern conditions. The clergy on this occasion were joined by some nuns, and between them they faced the questions of 'the nature and exigencies of the virtue and vow of obedience both in its immovable roots and what is common in all forms of the religious state as well as from the point of view of its "adaptations" to feminine psychology and to contemporary circumstances'. (Introduction.) It would be impossible here to give any adequate idea of the contents of the volume. The design is on a wider scale than in any of the previous volumes, the question being discussed from the historical, theological, psychological and empirical stand-points—each of these aspects forms one of the four parts of the book. The history begins with the fathers of the desert and traces the varying ideas and practices of obedience up to the sixteenth century. The doctrine considers, besides the more obvious topics, that of 'Le mystère de la femme et l'obéissance religieuse' by Père Henry, O.P. Père Plé, O.P., treats psychologically the point of supreme importance regarding obedience and freedom, judgment and maturity of character. The