

on Beauty a Philosophico-Theological Enquiry, and the student need not be worried about his appreciation of Picasso for the treatment is as deep as it is broad. A paragraph from the Prologue will show its intense interest and importance: 'I certainly do not maintain that the aesthetic, religious and mystical experiences are the same thing, as some moderns would have it. They are indeed alike by analogy; yet the natural and the supernatural orders are infinitely distant from each other. Nonetheless, since all perfections and activities of the natural order are to be found in some way in the supernatural order, aesthetic psychology helps enormously in deepening the understanding of religious and mystical experiences.' So the reader is led to study the divine beauty in the souls of the just. (Editorial F.E.D.A. Valencia; n.p.)

DE VALORE SOCIALI CARITATIS is another Latin thesis which helps to link up the Christian's personal life of grace with the world organisation of society that is now emerging. Fr Edward E. Bezzina, O.P., shows the link very adroitly in his dissertation (D'Auria Editore Pontificio, Naples; n.p.). The whole question ultimately turns on the fact 'the last end of society is the same as the last end of the individual'. St Thomas has already insisted that 'the last end of the multitude of men is not to live virtuously, but through the virtuous life to reach the divine fruition' (quoted p. 51); that is one of the most comprehensive and fruitful statements for the student of Christian life and Fr Bezzina makes good use of it.

EXTRACTS

It may help readers to appreciate the papers that form the bulk of the present issue of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT if we include here a brief résumé of the discussions that followed them when they were originally delivered at the Conference. Père Albert Plé, O.P., editor of *La Vie Spirituelle*, gave the lead with his paper on Charity and *koinonia*, and the discussion centred on the way in which the love of the community—the Church, the parish, the religious house, the family—could be made a reality. To begin with, could one say that one loved personally and directly the *totality* of Christ-on-earth in a way that was distinct from loving Christ himself in every individual that one met? St Paul wrote of 'The Church *who* is in Corinth . . .', showing how the whole Church is realised in each distinct community in which one may find oneself living. So one does not only love the particular community as *part* of the Church, but *as* the Church herself, and so as the Person of the Word made flesh. This means that people actually worshipping and loving and living together are the object of an act of charity. A convert, for example, should be instructed so as to prepare him for entry into a family, a loving common life—how rarely the exposition of the catechism bears any relation to the

actual Catholic, common life into which the neophyte is to be introduced! We do not love essences or abstract doctrines, but we love the concrete Person in friendship.

The second paper on the Early Christian Community, given by Fr Anthony Ross, O.P., Prior of the Dominican Novitiate House at Woodchester, led, perhaps surprisingly, to a vigorous debate on the practice of obedience in the Church today—a virtue which of course is presupposed by love and the true 'common life'. Today people are often unwilling to accept the common traditions—as for example the custom for women to wear hats in church; this may be because obedience is taken simply as a *duty* and stops at the man who exercises the authority. Originally Christians more readily obeyed God in his Church, the *mysterion*. Now the multiplicity of regulations has tended to over-emphasise the juridical concept of obedience. In the earlier days disobedience at once had the aspect of breaking away from the common life, and so an attempt to set up another 'conventicle'. But obedience was a rational act and led to the freedom of the sons of God. Today Christians are so impersonal; they are quite unaware of each other and they do not live *together*, though they may live in the same area; so obedience is not seen as part of the common life of charity. For St Basil, for example, each of his monks was to obey all the others through love. The Prior was the 'eye' of God; and obedience was to the *koinonia*.

The discussion that followed the paper on the 'Monastic Ideal' by the Prior of Quarr Abbey, Fr Aelred Sillem, O.S.B., turned mostly upon the liturgy. The group was anxious to see how the spirit of the monastery in this respect could be shared by the laity. Fr Philip Hughes's contention, in his book on the subject, that the Reformation was made possible in England through the individualistic piety of the people fed by the *Imitation*, was referred to in this connection. But the difficulty of overcoming this individualism in spiritual matters was seen to lie in the impersonal nature of parish life. Unlike the monastery, the parish does not provide a natural basis for a common life; people meet in the parish church as by accident. What is needed is a sense of locality; it is, in a sense, the place that prays.

After Mgr H. F. Davis, the Vice-Rector of Oscott College, had spoken on the modern attempts to make the common life a greater reality, especially through the liturgy, the difficulty of modern 'devices' for encouraging liturgical interest was raised. The liturgy has become in some ways a technical and rubrical speciality of the clergy. Some simplification seemed desirable to prevent its becoming an intellectual exercise. Counter-attractions, such as the cinema, should be taken into account, for they nearly all demand no more than *passive* participation, so that a true share in the liturgy appears in contrast as a great effort. At the same time,

it must be remembered that the liturgy is a religious dance, and even today there are Africans, for example, who *have* to dance their religion. On the other hand, a timely word of warning was raised lest people should take too pessimistic a view of Christians today. In fact, most of them do understand the liturgy even if they cannot express it. It would be dangerous to take away what they have got and give them a new-fangled ritualism. The real difficulty lies not in church but in men's own lives, in the social and economic conditions in which people now exist. Someone pointed out that among the small Jewish agricultural communities recently established in Israel several had returned to a living Judaism and there was one example of the community becoming Christian. Work then should be linked to worship; the family meal should be a preparation for the Sacred Meal.

Mrs Frank Sheed spoke with such vigour and conviction on the Family and Common Life that the group was quite swept away by enthusiasm. Earlier His Lordship the Bishop had insisted that the life of the family was the most important factor in the modern struggle for true Christian living, and this speech disclosed what he meant as well as gathering all the strings that had been flung out in previous discussions and weaving them into a coherent pattern. This was especially true regarding hospitality and the need for smaller groups connected by a living liturgy. The speech was in fact so conclusive that the discussion afterwards dealt mainly with particular practical points such as the way to teach children to pray and the way school often monopolises the older children and takes them from their home. Particular stress was laid on the spirit and vow of poverty as the centre of the modern apostolate.

The evenings of the Conference were given to the discussion of, or reports on, select points. It is not possible to include a résumé of these. One of the reports, that on an already existing lay community, will appear in the February issue. The topics raised were very various, including the attitude of the clergy towards the intellectual laity, the need to insist on charity in a more constant and concrete way, after the manner of the Quakers, the apparent collapse of the spirit of real prayer among a great many of all types of Christians. Special insistence was laid on the need for hospitality, which should spring from true prayer and true charity. There was also a report on the life and work of a very vigorous Anglican community of missionaries. Arising from every paper and in every discussion appeared the question of the Scriptures as the true nourishment for the common life of the Christian in the body of Christ, and of the present neglect of the Scriptures. It was therefore decided to take this as the theme for the next Conference of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.