

EXTRACTS

ABBE MICHONNEAU writing in *La Revue Nouvelle* (September) on 'Missionary Liturgy' will arrest the attention of all who come across his article. Not only does he bring to it all the experience and vivacity which we have come to recognise through his now famous *Paroisse, Communauté Missionnaire* (in English *Revolution in a City Parish*) but he tackles a subject of immediate interest to thousands who are seeking to revive the spirit of religion today. The liturgy for the missionary, he says, is not an end, but a means. And by this he does not imply the simple truth (which however some enthusiasts even now forget) that the liturgy is a vehicle carrying souls to God, an act of religion which is not a theological virtue and therefore deals with things going towards God. He says that in his parish he and his clergy could organise beautiful high Masses, sung correctly and elegantly carried out, bringing to priests and people many consolations and elevations. 'Should I then have carried out a missionary task?' he asks. 'I should have, I do believe, done exactly the opposite. . . . The centre of attraction would have been *ad intra* and not *ad extra*.' He believes that such worship leads to satisfaction whereas he looks for 'une inquiétude, une passion missionnaire'. These ideas will certainly cause a certain disquiet among theologians for it would seem to suggest an even greater abuse of the worship of God than the present all too frequent habit of turning worship into instruction with running commentaries and explanations of acts of worship in which the people are meant to participate. But the zealous Abbé is intent really on establishing a popular liturgy, which requires a knowledge of and adaptation to the people. And in that we can go with him all the way.

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AN AMERICAN CONTEMPLATIVE of fame such as Thomas Merton has now become is surely matter for rejoicing for Fr Gillis, until recently the renowned editor of *The Catholic World*. For Fr Gillis has always shown himself over-sensitive to any suggestion of the superiority of Europe over America in any direction. And so he begins his article in the current (September) issue of *Cross and Crown* on this note. We should join heartily with him in his satisfaction but strangely Fr Gillis's sensitivity will not allow even Merton to carry off the crown because this contemplative seems to criticise the 'actives' and Fr Gillis, who is only too well aware that some Europeans tend to condemn the activism of the States, must boost its superiority in the true Christian life. In order to do this he quotes and misquotes St Thomas and falls into all the old, and we had hoped, outmoded confusions between the act of contemplative prayer and

the contemplative life, etc. Referring to St Thomas's insistence that *simpliciter* the contemplative life is superior to the active he writes:

Fr Garrigou-Lagrange and St Thomas are concerned in this spot only with theory and theology. When we step out of the pages of a book into actual life, we must admit that a contemplative life pure and simple does not exist. There are, only, or may be, moments of contemplation in an otherwise active life. Even in the life of the highest mystics contemplation can only alternate with action.

And he goes on to confuse the 'contemplative action' of teaching and preaching, which is that of the apostle and is the overflow of contemplation, with action in general, which is usually considered in terms of the moral, social virtues . . . and so on. All these confusions would be best passed over in silence except that this is the first article of the third issue of our Dominican contemporary *Cross and Crown*. No doubt the editors of this 'Thomistic Quarterly of Spiritual Theology' will gradually elaborate these important principles and we may look forward to future issues to clear up the many misunderstandings which exist in this field of theology.

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TECHNIQUE AND CONTEMPLATION is the title of the volume of *Etudes Carmelitaines* containing half the papers of the Fifth International Congress of Religious Psychology 1948 (the other half appears in a second volume under the title *Trouble et Lumière*, to be noted later in this journal). Approaching the fact of contemplative prayer from the natural plane the authors provide a great deal of interesting material for the mystical theologian to work upon. There is a study of the technique of hindu meditation, as well as an examination of the syntax of semitic languages as helping towards recollection. Inevitably too we find a long discussion on 'Acquired Contemplation' and the controversy surrounding it—from no less a pen than that of Roland Dalbiez. And over it all presides the sane and well-balanced figure of the editor and instigator of these international congresses, Fr Bruno, the distinguished Carmelite who inspires us with a confidence that these studies will not lose sight of the supernatural, the basic reality of contemplation.

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CHRISTMAS CARDS from A. P. Westbrook's collection (at 11 Dorset Road South, Bexhill, Sussex) are as varied as ever. Each set of samples sent for editorial comment has at least one new item, and there are several new reproductions of 'old masters'. These latter are the least satisfactory as they can give little impression of the beauty of the originals, but there are one or two modern designs which are fresh in conception and colour and will help to enliven

the mantelpiece of many a home this Christmas. The publisher generously announces:

As there has been no reduction in the high rate of Purchase Tax, in an endeavour to meet the popular demand for lower prices we have made substantial price reductions for many of our Christmas cards.

They range from 1½d. to 1s.4d. each. Miss Rutherford (Stratton on the Fosse, Bath, Somerset) however offers hers in dozens ranging from 2s. to 16s. Many of these are hand painted which nearly always brings an air of joy and life. All are of Christian inspiration except one robin on a holly branch.

Daphne V. Barry has designed two attractive red cards which have some suggestion of Aubrey Beardsley—our Lady's rich apparel emerges from a lily in one case and a supporting quartet of angels in the other in the same style as Beardsley. These are from a set of nine different types of Christmas Cards including designs by Eric Gill and David Jones published by the Ditchling Press, Hassocks, Sussex (5s. for the set, but also supplied individually).

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