

special way share in this glory of Mary, has ever been, in the history of the Church, one of the chief ways of drawing souls to God. This apostolic aspect of chastity has been dealt with fully by Fr Valentine in a previous volume, *The Apostolate of Chastity*. In this present treatise he is concerned to help the young sister to keep faithful to her virginity in our present age when that state has been almost totally discredited. The traditional teaching of the Church, for example, that smallness of matter does not lessen guilt of mortal sin in the matter of chastity is openly laughed at as pious scrupulosity by our modern propaganda. Whereas it is a common-place of traditional Christian behaviour that such virtues as modesty and gentleness of speech and deportment are essential for the preservation of virtue, nowadays all this refinement and delicacy have been removed in the name of the realism forced upon our youth by the aftermath of two world wars. But in face of the collapse of morality, an even stronger build-up of the outer defences of chastity is necessary. So, much of what Fr Valentine has to say in this treatise is not directly concerned with chastity. In the opinion of the present reviewer he has succeeded in vindicating the traditional teaching of the Church in this lucid and most helpful book.

MATTHEW RIGNEY, O.P.

EVELYN UNDERHILL. By Margaret Cropper. (Longmans; 25s.)

A friend who read this book before me was surprised to discover that Evelyn Underhill was married, and it is true that the reading public during her lifetime created an artificial *persona*, the mask of mystic and recluse through which the oracle that was Evelyn Underhill seemed to speak. This biography, which is written with great affection and frankness by one who knew her personally during her lifetime, not only fills up this sort of gap in our knowledge but does a little to solve the puzzle that she will always be. Evelyn Underhill, besides directing retreats and writing books and letters of spiritual direction, lived a full and normal life happily married to the sweetheart of her childhood and enjoying the society of numerous friends, among whom were counted novelists and writers such as Sylvia Townsend Warner, Laurence Housman and Arthur Symons. Yet even here there are, as there must be in anyone's biography, unanswered questions. How much did she regret the childlessness of her marriage? Was it perhaps a cross accepted with greater fortitude than we might imagine?

We shall never know and we should not pry, but it is part of the enigma that she will always remain. She is best known as the woman who helped those who could not relate religious experience to any institutional Church, and in a measure this is the pattern of her own religious life. Shortly before her marriage she spent a week with the

French Franciscan nuns at Southampton, and the day after she came away experienced what she called a conversion and had no doubt that her ultimate home would be the Catholic Church. She never became a Catholic, and the reason that is popularly accepted is that she could not bring herself to submit to the terms of the encyclical *Pascendi*. Certainly she was conscious that what she called her own modernism was an obstacle, but in her letters to Fr Robert Hugh Benson before the encyclical was published other obstacles can be seen. She did not stay the whole week at the Franciscan convent for fear of sudden submission to the Church, a submission which she saw as a sacrifice of intellectual honesty and a surrender to emotion. In addition she was considerably upset at the thought of the distress she would cause to her future husband. The fact was, too, that she did not yet believe in Christ, and it was a long time before, with the help and advice of Baron von Hügel, our Lord came to figure at all in her religious life. Another thread from the tapestry of her personality is to be found in her early letters to her fiancé. Their tone is quite remarkable: not only is the expression of her love for him entirely motherly (though there is no reason whatever to suppose that true married love was ever excluded from their relationship), but there is a determination to sacrifice her own interests for his welfare that seems almost fanatical. 'You have promised that if it really hurts to be without me, you will ask me to come home, won't you?' [All the way from Italy, that was.] . . . 'Whatever happens, I must not desert you, or put my fads before your real interests.'

These things do not make a complete picture, and there does not seem to be one. Whatever the reason, Evelyn Underhill never became a Catholic, nor did she find herself fully at ease in the Church of England. It is hard to say if she ever completely shed her modernism, though under the direction of Baron von Hügel her prayer became more christocentric, as she calls it. Whether she believed in the divinity of Christ is not clear. However, largely as the result of her writings, she was called upon by numerous people to help with their problems in prayer and the mystical life and it was her inborn belief in the goodness of God's creation and her conviction that creatures must be of positive assistance to us on our way to God that was such a help to these souls. Running through all this of course was a doctrine of indifferentism that is dismaying, for it poisoned much of her teaching. In isolation the parts of her teaching are generally sound and helpful; it is only when we try to co-ordinate them that we see how much they lack the stiffening of revealed truth. On looking back one feels that what put her off from the Catholic Church was not that *Pascendi* condemned what she believed, but that it condemned anything at all. She would

have nothing excluded from the kingdom of Heaven, not even cats. Paradoxically enough one is edified by the strength she gave to others, but this is because we believe the grace of God may work outside ordinary channels.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SAINT: *Thérèse of Lisieux*. Translated by Ronald Knox. (The Harvill Press; 21s.)

The content of this volume has become a spiritual classic and hardly needs any comment, but it was written in French by a simple French girl. It is virtually impossible to catch the exact mood of the French in a translation, just as the language of Shakespeare cannot be translated into any other language. Mgr Knox has got as near as seems possible to the impossible. Nevertheless there are moments when inevitably he has failed. The mentality and mode of expression of this young but nevertheless great saint is so much her own and so French that it can only be captured in the original. We must, however, be very grateful to Mgr Knox for this excellent effort, especially as it gives us the full text of the original. All who are in any way interested should have this volume.

DOMINIC SIRE, O.P.

LE PÈRE JACQUES. By Michel Carrouges. (Editions du Seuil.)

The days are over when the biography of a holy person must of necessity be a chain of piously interpreted events. Here is the story of a very forceful character of our own times told with directness. Everybody did not like him—and why should they? Perhaps the characteristic of this man was his uncompromising nature and yet his essential charity in his dealings with other men. The latter part of his life was utterly selfless and surely brings home to us that sanctity is not a thing of the past and can be attained even in the most adverse circumstances: in fact was perhaps helped by the very adversity he met. As a straightforward narrative of an undoubtedly holy priest and religious it is interesting reading, especially when set in present-day or almost present-day conditions.

DOMINIC SIRE, O.P.

THE CONQUEST OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. By John of the Angels, O.F.M., tr. by Cornelius J. Crowley. (Cross and Crown; \$3.95; Herders; 32s.)

This series of dialogues between a Franciscan religious and his spiritual director, written in the early sixteenth century, would form an excellent basis for retreat subjects, or it would be suitable for use as a meditation book for those who have put themselves in the path of