

THE APOSTOLATE OF CHASTITY. By Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. (Burns and Oates; 18s.)

This is an important and well-written work, which should be carefully read by all religious sisters, and also by priests whose duty it may be to guide and encourage these sisters. There is undoubtedly much ignorance about the essentials of religious life, even among those who have made profession of this way of life, not least among superiors. Simply to shroud in mystery the virtue and vow of Chastity often creates a deeper puzzle which of itself will never ripen into understanding, and is repressive in a way that may be detrimental to mind and body. It is safe to say that nobody could have written a book such as this without a deep understanding of the teaching of St Thomas, and without a very wide and long experience of the particular problems that arise in communities of women. Fr Valentine evidently possesses both these qualities. 'If our sisters are not worthy of our encouragement in their desire to give a corrective feminine emphasis in the practical application of truth to human affairs, then there is something radically wrong with their religious life. . . . Let us repeat our conviction once again: woman has still to manifest her full potentialities to the world. And as the Christian woman is the highest ideal of womanhood, we must expect such a manifestation to come mainly through our religious sisters.' (p. 69.)

We must not, I think, by over-emphasizing the apostolic and social value of Chastity, obscure the primary purpose of the religious state, which is the personal sanctification of its members. Poverty, Chastity and Obedience are instrumental in the achievement of this aim.

The difference between acquired and infused virtues is very well expounded, and is of great moment in the ascetical life and for training. But the signs of virtue are not always the same. 'Some adolescents who enter religion show every sign of having a chaste disposition; but the plain truth is that they are immature, often retarded, and suffer from a kind of holy stupidity; they are timid, bewildered, helpless in emergencies and tend to cling to others for protection. And as helplessness of any kind pulls at the heart-strings of a woman, they usually do not appeal in vain.' (p. 100.)

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are endowments of soul bestowing a supernatural sensitiveness to the divine touch, and ranging over not only the theological virtues as well, so regulating the whole of life according to his will from the supernatural motive of the love of God. This all-pervading influence has its place particularly in that refinement of soul and character which is called Chastity, and is the subject of this excellent book.

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