

difficulties. What for instance will they make of the following on p. 123? 'Two things are to be noted in making any distinctions among the habits and virtues: The first is the formal nature under which each proceeds, for this formal principle specifies the act and the habit', etc. It would be only too easy to multiply examples. It would have been useful if short notes had been added to help the uninitiated reader. We feel, too, that in some passages, the translator has missed the almost lyric quality of the original; for instance the passage translated on p. 101 is almost entirely composed of biblical allusions, which give it its particular savour, and somehow this seems to be lost in the translation. We think, too, that references to the biblical texts alluded to might have been given in such a passage as this (in fact only one out of twenty-two is given).

ANTONINUS FINILI, O.P.

THE CASE OF THERESA NEUMANN. By Hilda C. Graf. (Mercier Press; 12s. 6d.)

The general conclusion of this book is that 'a supernatural origin of the phenomena exhibited by Theresa Neumann is not *necessarily* demanded by the evidence at our disposal which, admittedly, is not as complete, in many respects, as one might desire'. The general impression made upon the reader, however, will be that the evidence has been subjected to such destructive examination, that there is very little left to support any kind of origin other than a pathological one; and that the author is unduly modest in her conclusion.

Some years before there was any sign of phenomena which could be described as 'mystical' or miraculous, Theresa had contracted an illness following upon the fright and exhaustion of helping to put out a fire. This started with pains in the back, leading to paralysis, abdominal symptoms of all kinds, blindness, etc. It all certainly pointed to hysteria, and the condition was diagnosed as such by four doctors. Next came the sudden 'cures' of sores, contractures, blindness, and 'appendicitis'. Then followed visions, the stigmata, apparent cessation of eating, clairvoyance, knowledge of strange tongues and so forth. So remarkable have been these manifestations that to some observers there has seemed to be no doubt of their supernatural nature; one of these is her parish priest, and another Bishop Teodorowicz, from whose writings the author quotes extensively. The observations of others, such as the Professor who investigated the case for the Congregation of Sacred Rites, lead to the conclusion that all these phenomena can be explained on the basis of hysteria. For example, Theresa passes into states of trance during which she has visions of the Passion; this is followed by a condition of complete childishness, and then at times a state of 'exalted rest'. The author of this book makes some very

pertinent remarks on the difference between these states—which correspond to the well-known phenomena of dissociation or 'split personality'—and the true mystic states, which are not marked by unconsciousness and in which the subject retains his intelligence and volition. Far from being in a mediumistic trance, the true mystic will be in a state of exalted wisdom. It is a remarkable thing that the Church has, from the earliest times, made the distinction in the 'discernment of Spirits'; witness the declaration against Montanus about 200 A.D. and the writings of the Greek Fathers.

It is not for me to judge how correct is the author in the discussion of true mysticism as against the pseudo, and her application of this to the case under discussion, but from a psychiatric point of view it would seem that she makes a convincing case for a natural explanation of the whole strange affair. It is not a case of malingering or deception but rather of unconscious simulation. Apart from the details, however, it is the whole picture that counts: it is the richness of personality, the total effect upon humanity which constitutes the saint. Hysteria may certainly be a part of sainthood, but there is so much more of everything, that the pathological is lost in the sublime. Theresa Neumann, by this measure, is found wanting; but may she not be a lesser light, which yet bears a true witness? 'God writes straight with crooked lines' says the proverb, and it is not for us to judge what part she plays in the divine economy. Apart from the judgment on the case, the book is fascinating as a kind of detective novel, and can be warmly commended on its own merits.

C.B.

THOUGHTS FOR MEDITATION. An Anthology selected and arranged by N. Gangulce, with a preface by T. S. Eliot. (Faber; 9s. 6d.)

A collection of uplifting passages, torn from their literary and historical contexts and seldom with any definite or verifiable references, from 'masters of the spiritual life'. These include, besides a number of Christian saints, such miscellaneous worthies as Amiel, Boehme, Emily Brontë, the Buddha, Donne, Emerson, Gandhi, Heraclitus, Aldous Huxley, Dean Inge, Isaiah, Jowett, Keyserling, Newman, Nietzsche, Sankara, Shelley, unspecified Upanishads and an anonymous contributor to *Vedanta and the West*. The compiler has satisfied himself that these 'over-ride the barriers which divide men of divergent religious faiths; in their mystical experience there remains no illusion of dualism between the supernatural and the natural', for 'the spiritual experience gained through meditation is a deeper thing than dogma. . . broadens our consciousness beyond the distinctions made by creeds'. He assures us he had intended these gleanings for his own private use only, but having found them helpful in his 'quest for self-realisation and peace . . .