

During the last war the Society lost their house in Bow, but while British bombers were retaliating over German-occupied Paris the sisters of Marie Auxiliatrice and their lay helpers knelt day and night in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in their church beside Montmartre. Now God in his fashion retaliates and the English noviciate can only be the fruit of that prayer. Such fruit cannot fail to grow and ripen.



REVIEWS

POVERTY. Being the English Version of *La Pauvreté in Problèmes de la Religieuse d'aujourd'hui*. Translated by Lancelot C. Sheppard. (Religious Life Series No. IV; Blackfriars; 15s.)

Poverty is one of the trickiest elements in the life of a religious today. For one thing it easily fires the imagination of the idealist, but because it is concerned with material things the ideal can be lost in a series of fanatical decisions about subsisting on the bare necessities of life, without modern conveniences or comforts of any kind. This often leads to unrest and criticism of the existing state of affairs in religious Orders. Another problem arises from the highly complicated life of modern society in which the religious finds himself necessarily implicated—within a welfare state, for example, he has to have ready cash to pay his health insurance as well as his rates and taxes, while the system of stocks and shares upon which the contemplative in particular subsisted has become so modified as to have undermined the basis of the material life of many enclosed religious.

With all this, it was necessary to review the question of poverty in the life of the modern religious without being carried off into the realms of the mystical or romantic. Père Plé, of *La Vie Spirituelle*, therefore gathered his group of clergy, expert in the question of modern religious life, to discuss these problems in so far as they applied to the nuns and religious sisters. A volume, as usual, resulted from these discussions, and it is here translated into English for the benefit of the large number of English-speaking religious. The authors avoid the romantic, but the book opens with an excellent study by Père Bouyer on the paradox of our Lord's preaching 'Blessed are the poor' to a people brought up on the Bible which seemed to them to indicate an ideal life of plentiful possessions and ease in an earthly Jerusalem. Other authors follow this with a history of monastic poverty rising from our Lord's invitation 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . .' up to the particular ideals of Poverty of St Dominic, St Francis and S. Ignatius.

After that the subject changes to the economics of religious life and the theology behind religious poverty. And with all this as a background the authors turn to the application of the ideal to the modern scene in terms of the present social consciousness about the poor, the need of the enclosed nuns to earn their livelihood as determined by the Pope's encyclical *Sponsa Christi*, the problems of the Superior and the bursars, and so on.

The whole volume will be found to be of great practical value not only to contemplative nuns and active religious sisters, but also to all those engaged in the task of religious life today and brought up against the difficulty of living according to the vow of poverty in a world which has become so preoccupied with material values. The translation is by Mr Lancelot Sheppard, which is a guarantee of accuracy and good style.

JOHN CORSON

LE THÈME DE LA PARFAITE ALLIANCE DE GRÂCE DANS S. JEAN DE LA CROIX. Par Henri Martin. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

The present study of St John of the Cross is a detailed refutation of the view of the Saint expressed in the work of Jean Baruzi. By systematically expounding St John's teaching the author of the present study wants to aid the reader to a better understanding of the scope of his teaching, and to preserve him from the fallacies of Baruzi's interpretation. In this country such discussion may perhaps be less needed than on the Continent, where even a Carmelite like Edith Stein frequently misinterpreted the Mystical Doctor owing to her dependence on Baruzi. Nevertheless the systematic presentation of the Saint's teaching, of his theology of faith and grace, and especially of the central place he gives to love, is very successfully accomplished. Even those not conversant with Baruzi may sometimes be tempted to think that St John of the Cross, with his relentless asceticism, comes near to a Manichean view of nature. The present book is a brilliant refutation of this view, supported by a wealth of well-chosen texts and a most convincing vindication of the perfect balance of the Saint's teaching. There is no shadow of a spurious 'gnosis', of an esoteric mysticism falsely so called, in his work. For him the mystic life rests on the secure foundation of solid virtue, and its essence may be reduced to two axioms: first, the only perfect happiness of man consists in loving God alone; secondly, in this life the love of God is tasted only in the inebriation of the cross. The teaching of the Carmelite Doctor is here analysed with a lucidity which we have come to expect from French theologians. The book should be a help especially to those who would penetrate more deeply into the theological principles underlying the Saint's work.

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