

BLACKFRIARS

that on one or two occasions books published thirty years ago are cited as evidence of views current to-day.

Praise is due to the printers of the book. The excellent way in which it has been produced will help to ensure it the success it certainly deserves.

L.W.

CASTI CONNUBII. Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Pius XI on Christian Marriage. With a commentary by Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P. (Sheed & Ward; 2/6.)

Fr. Joyce's work reviewed above has but one passing reference to the *Casti Connubii*. His was an historical and doctrinal study, whereas the Pope, though, as he says, following in the footsteps of Leo XIII he re-affirms the Gospel teaching on the nature of Christian marriage, is for the greater part of the Encyclical 'expounding more fully certain points called for by the circumstances of our times' (p. 4), points which belong rather to the domain of moral theology. Fr. McNabb indeed, as we learn from his characteristic introduction to the present edition, thinks that 'the Encyclical may be seen by later ages to have been the official opening of the great ethical battle which, if we are to learn from the history of defined dogma, will be the occasion of the Church's ethical development' (p. xiii).

The dozen pages of notes in which Fr. McNabb comments on certain passages of the Encyclical will be read with profit. We are not told who is responsible for the translation of the Encyclical itself. It does not seem to be always above criticism. Indeed in one important passage it would be difficult to justify it. The passage in Latin is as follows: 'Habentur enim tam in ipso matrimonio quam in coniugalis iuris usu etiam secundarii fines, ut sunt mutuum adiutorium mutuusque fovendus amor et concupiscentiae sedatio, quos intendere coniuges minime vetantur, dummodo salva semper sit intrinseca illius actus natura ideoque eius ad primarium finem debita ordinato.' In the English it runs thus: 'For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.'

L.W.

The April number of *LES ETUDES CARMÉLITAINES* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 15 fr.) is chiefly concerned with questions arising out of the 'mysterious doings at Beauraing' and the ecstatic phenomena remarked in Teresa Neumann.

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The first article, however, deals with deeper things and shows, by a careful study of tradition, that infused contemplation is the goal of the Carmelite way. The author, Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, asks how a religious order can set before its members a goal which unaided human powers cannot reach.

He answers that, while we cannot give ourselves mystical graces of contemplation, we can make ourselves fit for them by a life of recollection, self-denial and fervent prayer. These dispositions God will certainly take into account.

Graces of mystical contemplation, Fr. Gabriel points out, are needed for perfection and hence those who are pledged to a life of perfection need such graces in a special way.

Two articles, of great interest, deal with the case of Teresa Neumann of Konnersreuth.

Dom Alois Mager, O.S.B., holds that Konnersreuth is still a problem. He sees danger in the exclusive pretensions of the *Konnersreuther Kreis* to examine and judge the ecstatic and he cannot forget that, after Teresa's accident, on March 10th, 1918, the doctor who gave her the certificate for insurance, declared her to be suffering from 'grave hysteria as a result of a serious accident.'

Père Lavaud, O.P., on the contrary, passes a favourable judgment on Teresa. He points out her deep but simple piety, her readiness to offer her sufferings for sinners, the many conversions—such as those of Dr. Fritz Gerlich and Benno Karpeles—which have resulted from visits paid to her.

The chief features of the case of Teresa (Resl) Neumann are (1) her visions of the Passion, which take place during her ecstasies on Thursdays and Fridays; (2) the Stigmata; (3) the fact that Teresa never sleeps and never takes anything to eat or drink; (4) her states of 'sublime repose.' Teresa's visions begin and end with her ecstasies. In them she sees Our Lord in the different phases of His Passion as clearly and vividly as if she were present. The sight of His sufferings grieves her beyond words and her grief is increased by her powerlessness to help Him. At the same time her stigmata, including the weal on the shoulder, give her excruciating pain, as well as exuding blood in profusion.

The visions are followed by a state of absorption due to the still lasting impression of what she has seen. She is utterly absorbed by the vision she has just seen, unable to compare it with previous ones, and still more to guess what she will see next.

When the vision is over, she falls back as if abandoned by the force that has sustained her. She cannot see, but she can hear and speak.

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As the vision is going on, she watches it with an extraordinarily impressive facial mimicry. Her features reflect or respond to the expression of Jesus in a most touching way.

When she subsequently recounts her vision, her powers of expression become those of a child of five, although her mental powers remain unchanged.

She frequently reverts to what has struck her most—everything, that is, that particularly concerns Our Lord Himself. She displays impatience when bystanders show interest in other details, perhaps of an archaeological nature. She calls these subsidiary matters, 'Nebensachen.' During this state she sometimes repeats in a mechanical way Aramaic words she had heard during the ecstasy.

During the state of absorption that follows her ecstasies, she displays certain abnormal powers, such as hierognosis and cardiognosis. Her visions, with the renewal of the stigmata, leave her in a state of intense suffering and great fatigue. After a few hours, however, she is restored to perfect health, freshness and vigour, and this without sleep. This seemingly miraculous result is due to her enjoyment of a state which has been called the 'state of sublime repose,' a form of supernatural sleep in which she is closely and happily united to God. Her body is then restored by a superhuman force, presumably that of Holy Eucharist, since she takes no food and her states of 'sublime repose' nearly always follow upon communion.

During this state she answers questions, displaying supernatural knowledge and insight.

This 'state of sublime repose' seems to be a new mystical phenomenon, not referred to by previous exponents of mystical states.

Teresa remembers nothing of what she has said during this state, whereas she remembers clearly all the visions seen during a time of utter abstraction.

The state of repose lasts for about twenty minutes. On coming out of it she yawns and stretches herself, like one awaking from sleep. For this reason Dom Mager thinks it must be likened to a form of hypnosis or trance.

Dom Mager also takes exception to the fact that while Teresa is in this state, what she says is uttered in the third person, as if Our Lord Himself were speaking. ('You must not disturb Resl now'). This, however, is not the only interpretation of the remarks she makes in this impersonal way. Perhaps some of her entourage (the above-mentioned *Konnnersreuther Kreis*) have been indiscreet here in denouncing all criticism of what is thus said, as an offence against Him who is really speaking. Father

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Fahsel has, it seems, gone so far as to address himself to Teresa when praying to the Saviour.

Of the dignified and deeply religious character of the manifestations there can be no doubt. When the dust of controversy has subsided, there seems little fear lest the simpler ones among us should be disappointed in our estimate of Teresa Neumann's devout simplicity.

Aptly inserted between the article on Teresa Neumann and another on 'les faits mystérieux de Beauraing,' the same Review publishes a brief study of the 'origin and mechanism of hallucinations.' A hallucination is defined as 'a perception without an object' (Esquirol).

According to Baillarger, a hallucination involves three conditions :

(1) An involuntary exercise of memory and imagination ; (2) the suspension of external impressions ; and (3) the formation of internal stimulations of the sensory apparatus.

The author, Professor Jean Lhermitte, points out that, in the reproduction of an image, the whole brain has to function in a very complicated process. Moreover, as these images are accompanied by appropriate feelings, the whole organism is brought into play in their connection, so that disorders in the vegetative processes are liable to have their repercussion in the realm of the imagination.

The 'general hallucinatory state,' so-called by Henry Head, is attributed by Mourgue to a certain amount of cortical inhibition, resulting in a fragmentation of the personality. The author finally discusses a number of examples of auditory hallucinations, the supernatural character of which he rejects, on account either of the morbid state of the subject, or of the obviousness and poverty of content of the utterances alleged to be supernatural.

At Beauraing, in Walloon Belgium, from November 29th, 1932, to January 3rd, 1933, five children, aged nine to fifteen, Fernande, Gilberte and Albert Voisin, and Andrée and Gilberte Degeimbre, are said to have had thirty-three visions of Our Lady.

On January 3rd last, Fernande, discomfited at having seen nothing, stayed on and was 'struck down' by a marvellous globe of fire 'containing the Virgin,' at the very moment when a number of witnesses saw a photographer light a flare of magnesium. Père Bruno de Jésus-Marie, Dr. Paul van Gehuchter, of the Catholic University of Louvain, and Dr. Etienne de Greef, Professor of Criminal Anthropology at the School of Criminal Sciences at Louvain, bring their testimony and their reasoned opinion on the 'mysterious' happenings of Beauraing.

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The five children went each evening to recite the rosary at a grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes near Beauraing. After the recitation of a certain number of *Aves*, the children declare that Our Lady appeared. Each evening they noticed some special feature in her appearance, all five noticing the same feature on the same evening and reporting it in the same terms.

Dr. Van Gehuchter, who was present at one of these scenes, when over twenty-five thousand people were present, says he is convinced that the children saw nothing at all. The *Aves* were recited with very little fervour or conviction. The speeches attributed to Our Lady are extremely poor in content. When asked *why* the Blessed Virgin appeared, Andrée Degeimbre replied angrily: 'Could you tell *me*, I wonder?'

There is very little change in the children's appearance, still less in their conduct. They usually come to the grotto from the cinema. One girl, as she makes her way through the crowd, says: 'Let me pass, I am the seer!' (Je suis la voyante).

'Aren't you in a hurry to get to the grotto in the evening?' asked Dr. van Gehuchten.

'No,' replied the girl, 'that doesn't matter; she only comes when we are there.'

'Do you pray for sinners?'

'Are there any?' (Gilberte).

Fernande: 'It is like the Mystery of the Yellow Room' (a film).

Gilberte: 'Or else the Mystery of the White Lady!' (a novel).

Some members of the children's families belong to spiritualistic clubs.

In short, the general impression produced by these children on sober observers is not reassuring.

Alas for twenty-five thousand men and women who can thus waste their time in a quest of the 'supernatural' (of the type described above), abandoning the springs of living water in the search for broken cisterns!

CYPRIAN RICE, O.P.

ANNE. By a Benedictine Nun of Stanbrooke. (Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1932; 5/- net.)

This life of Anne de Guigné, the little French girl who died only eleven years ago, is delightful reading. Her story is told in a simple and objective manner. This is why the book is so successful; the facts are given, and the reality and fascination of the supernatural can hardly fail to convince. For Anne provides a very happy example of the truth that grace is founded and built up on nature: she remained always a wholly lovable and genuine child, and was in no way made self-conscious or