

THE NATIONAL LITURGICAL WEEK, 1944. Conferences given at St. Patrick's, New York. (The Liturgical Conference, Chicago, II, Illinois. English agent: Society of St. Gregory).

The *Church Times*, recently reviewing a book on religion in America, remarked that Roman Catholicism does not appear at its best there. Evidently the reviewer is unacquainted with the American liturgical movement and its publications, such as *Orate Fratres* and these annual reports of liturgical conferences.

As year by year they reach us, they give us a deep impression of the ever-increasing vitality and strength of the liturgical movement in America. A gathering of over a thousand people, priests, religious and laity (with the laity the largest group) brought together by zeal for the liturgy seems beyond the dreams of possibility in this country. Yet, of course, the proportions are different and it is not the numbers that matter. What *does* matter is that bishops and priests have backed the liturgical weeks in a way that we are quite unaccustomed to in this country. Another sign of strength and growing confidence is the evidence of frank self-criticism that we detect in the current series. Mgr. Stedman's report on a questionnaire sent to seven-hundred chaplains is not only the most valuable paper in the book but a social document of first-class importance. If the diagnosis is gloomy, it only serves to demonstrate that more not less liturgy is necessary to Christianize modern man.

The subject of the Conference was "Liturgy and Catholic Life" and most of the papers are applications of liturgical principles in the practical order. Dr. Lamb's opening homily is a model of its kind and coming from a bishop possesses a high authority. Fr. Carroll contributes an excellent paper on the building up of the parish round the Mass and the sacraments. Fr. Burke's paper on the sacramental character is a careful theological statement of the matter which was perhaps a little difficult to listen to but has a more than passing value. "Our problem is not going to be solved by inaugurating Vespers on a Sunday afternoon . . . thirty of your people will come to Vespers; three hundred will go to the movies; three thousand will listen to Charlie McCarthy". This, from Fr. Francis Wendell, O.P., is evidence of his realism and must be confessed to contain a measure of truth. Only, it is not argument for *not* inaugurating Vespers on Sunday afternoon. It is just not enough.

Other subjects dealt with were chant, art (by Lavanoux—exhilarating! And the American for "repositary art"—"Barclay St."); education, personal piety and various experiments in parishes. Among these last, Fr. Pennien's experiences in building his church and, with episcopal permission, his saying Mass facing the people, form a document of considerable importance. Five articles, in the best Benedictine tradition, were added to the papers read at the School and complete the book.

Perhaps Dom Sorg's learned article on the vernacular question will excite most interest and discussion. This year a valuable bibliography of liturgical literature has been added.

Now that the war has ceased, we hope the American Liturgical Movement will grow and expand. In so large a country as America, regional conferences should be very profitable.

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MOTHER OF CARMEL. By E. Allison Peers. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.).

At the close of this study of St. Teresa of Jesus, Professor Allison Peers remarks: "Never have there been more motherless children in need of her than to-day". It is this sense of the urgent relevance of her life and teaching that gives to *Mother of Carmel* a sincerity and warmth that at once link it with *Spirit of Flame*, the same author's deservedly popular life of St. John of the Cross. Yet here are no modifications in the interests of what may fairly be called the new Gnosticism: *The Way of Perfection* is not a Californian boulevard. St. Teresa is assuredly the "undaunted daughter of Desires", yet Professor Peers leaves us in no doubt of her "virility, her unpretentious and unaffected sanctity".

Too often St. Teresa's life has been presented as one of unlikely contrasts. The mystic hardly suggests the shrewd business woman, the author of *The Interior Castle* seems out of place on her endless journeys. It is one of the principle merits of *Mother of Carmel* that it resolves apparent inconsistencies at the proper level—that of the Seventh Mansion, where storms and interruptions pass quickly and cannot disturb that fixed life of Union, in which God and the soul "have become like two who cannot be separated from one another". And the biographer has only to allow St. Teresa to speak for herself, for "her autobiographical, expository and hortatory pages blend to perfection," in order to reveal an overwhelming unity of purpose from the child's desire of martyrdom to her death, worn out, and characteristically still travelling. "My Lord, it is time to set out; may the journey be a propitious one and may Thy will be done".

St Teresa's charm of character, her solid good sense and her humour, make her one of the most attractive of apologists for Christian perfection. She never loses sight of the needs of beginners: even in the innermost chamber of the Castle of Contemplation she hears the stumbling footsteps of those who are still at the entrance-hall far away. She was never a "frowning saint", and she insisted that "the Lord walks among the pots and pans" just as much as in the Garden of Eden. Professor Peers modestly hopes that his book may inspire its readers to turn to St. Teresa's own writings. This it will certainly do, and,