

was to give an account of the journeyings of her soul from her earliest infancy to the time when, returning to the full practice of the faith, she found safe anchorage and full spiritual employment. She would not have thought of her life as having any special interest except in so far as she was a kind of personification, as everybody should be, of the love of Christ, in and through his mystical body, for all mankind.

She was not an ordinary person; her extraordinariness was literary, artistic, spiritual and psychic. This account of her life illustrates all four, the first three on every page and the fourth in her account of three extraordinary experiences, though these are so spiritual that one might be excused for calling them visions. She had one constant, conscious purpose, which was spiritual, and three constant, half-conscious impulses. Her one desire was to convey to all who would listen the knowledge and love of Christ and of all men in him. This book is the story of how she herself learned that knowledge and love; the facts narrated and the characters portrayed are chosen for their relevance to that one same theme, universal love in the mystical body of Christ.

Baptized at the age of six (though the baptism performed a few hours after she was born, by a non-Catholic uncle, was most probably valid), she lived rather intensely through an early education of which the chief value was that it provided material for an entirely personal development. Later she was shocked into a state of passionate resentment by what seemed to her (and sometimes was, no doubt) the uncharitableness of Catholics; she then (to quote her own words) tried hard but unsuccessfully to leave the Church; she tried everything, from the Salvation Army to Buddhism. After a period of estrangement, during which she was outwardly lapsed but always in her heart at home, she came back. That is the whole story, in this book. There was much more to the life of Caryll Houselander but it will have to await the biography which Messrs Sheed and Ward are no doubt planning. This present book, Caryll's own version of the main drift of her life, will always remain a key to the interpretation of whatever else is written about her.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

LE RÔLE DE LA RELIGIEUSE D'AUJOURD'HUI. (Cerf.)

This particular collection of papers is the product of the third, French, national congress of priests who have charge of religious sisters, a congress initiated by the episcopal commission for religious, and organized by Fr Plé, O.P. The sub-title is *Problèmes de la Religieuse d'aujourd'hui* and the theme is the part played by Sisters in the present-day Church. Vows are not taken for personal sanctification alone, but love of God is bound up integrally with love of neighbour, and therefore religious must be apostolic. Surely this is the eternal question

of how Martha learnt from Mary to become more contemplative, and thus, while still remaining active, became a saint.

There are eleven papers, of which six are on principles and five on present problems. The first essay, by G. Liévin, C.S.S.R., forms an admirable introduction with extensive quotations from the words of Pius XII whose concern so often was with religious. There is too an excellent article on the theology of the religious life by Fr Congar, O.P.

Joseph Lecler, S.J., draws lessons from history in the next paper. In such a comprehensive survey it seems odd to find no mention of the rule of St Augustine, or of the work of St Catharine of Siena, that supreme contemplative who was called to such super-human activity.

An interesting chapter on the religious sister and the liturgy by Dom O. Rousseau, O.S.B., follows. And then an interesting article by René Carpentier, S.J., in which he draws attention to two major difficulties when considering the religious life from the point of view of canon law. How can charity or the state of perfection exist in the framework of external, juridical institutions? And how can one have an external apostolic activity in institutes which canonically entail retreat from the world?

There follows a short summary of the contemplative life by L. M. de S. Joseph, O.C.D. It does not seem altogether just to dismiss St Thomas as a kind of christianized Greek philosopher, inclining to intellectualism because of his use of Aristotle—and indeed to eclecticism. Surely St Thomas' writings are bathed in scripture and in the Christian *ethos* as a fish is in water?

Under *Problèmes*, there are some factual articles on the actual work and difficulties of religious sisters in the diocese, in the missions, and in dechristianized society. The importance of co-operation between different Christian bodies is stressed by Fr Hervé Pennec, O.M.I., in *Une pastorale d'ensemble*.

Finally, there is a very important article on the role of the priest in the formation of a religious sister for the apostolate. This could be read humbly by all priests, even though they may disagree with the conclusions. How can we teach unless we listen first, and are ready to learn even while teaching?

Thus it can be seen that the book contains much informative matter concerned with religious sisters, and that it faces fairly and squarely the problems, questions, and difficulties of those trying to become saints like St Martha.

J-D. CHEALES, O.P.

LITURGIE ET CONTEMPLATION. Par Jacques et Raïssa Maritain. (Collection *Présence Chrétienne*. Desclée de Brouwer; 48FB.)

The theme of this book, so the authors tell us, is that there exists