

EXTRACTS

THE WORK OF PERE PLE, Editor of *La Vie Spirituelle*, on behalf of religious sisters is becoming more widely known in this country. *The Clergy Review* for February contains an article on the subject, which has from time to time appeared in the pages of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT; the author repeats the quotation from the French hierarchy's recommendations to the clergy on the question of vocations and he concludes:

Comment on this admirable document would be superfluous. Although it was issued primarily for the priests and religious of France, it is equally applicable to all in England, and merits careful consideration. The present situation in England may not be as desperate as on the Continent, but who dares to say that it may not become so, unless we adopt some such measures as are laid down by the Cardinals and Archbishops of France.

The possibility that we are in a decline in regard to vocations and not at the beginning of a new lease of life is previously discussed in the article. For the present limitation of family life and the new standards of education do not suggest that future vocations are today being fostered among the boys and girls of Catholic families. The situation is indeed grave as the author, Fr Skelton, insists. Perhaps Spain alone is the only European country in which the situation is not serious. The report on the vocations of religious women in that country, published in the *Supplement of La Vie Spirituelle* (15 February: from Blackfriars, 4s.), shows a notable all round increase in the numbers of religious between 1927 and 1948. But elsewhere the tale is depressingly the same—overworked religious houses having to be closed, the acceptance of unstable vocations etc. There is ample scope for the work of the Editor of *La Vie Spirituelle* throughout Europe, but even this is more in the nature of a diagnosis than of a cure.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SIN is the principal subject of the current *Supplement* already cited. Thomas Gilby, O.P., writes with verve, as we should expect, on *La Culpabilité*. Beginning with the principles laid down by St Augustine and St Thomas he shows how their objective attitude can be discovered also in the principles of some modern specialists:

Firstly they consider culpability as a normal symptom and as a curable condition, not as a morbid state. Secondly, it is not simply the mustiness of a purely personal evil action: it is a congenital attitude, handed on as human nature is handed on and cultivated in accordance with the conditions imposed. . . . Original sin is not considered as a sort of capricious calamity

which has befallen us as a result of a gaffe by our first representatives.

And from this starting point which in its depth is a doctrine of faith Father Gilby traces the total situation of human guilt as it spreads into the humanum, the body-soul structure. It is in particular false 'culpability', the false conscience which may require the services of the psychiatrist in order to re-establish a complete and healthy orientation towards good and evil action: 'The great temptation to hitch on to the formula which offers to sell security, to traffick in magic, in place of waiting for the gift', and the security of convention is allowed to smother the generosity of love.

* * * *

THOMAS MERTON concludes in the January issue of *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium* a study of the transforming union with God as described by St Bernard. The well known popular author shows himself deeply versed in the mystical writings of St John of the Cross as well as of his own St Bernard. He takes Professor Gilson to task for describing the great doctor's highest union in terms of transitory experiences which at most could only be the 'mystical betrothal' as described by St John of the Cross, whereas he proves it to be undoubtedly the permanent state of union known as 'marriage'. In the course of the argument Father Merton brings out very clearly and simply the differences between these two wonderful and highest of mystical graces, and he concludes on an interesting and typically Bernardine note:

The whole process, the whole spiritual life is the work of her through whom God willed us to receive all gifts and graces. St Bernard does not hesitate to give us another of his summaries of his spiritual doctrine in which the mystical marriage, our transformation by wisdom into God, is assigned to the Mother of God as her mission *par excellence* among the children of men. Through one woman we were born to the living death of cupidity; from our mother Eve we received the disfiguring form of the *proprium*: but God allowed this only in order that his wisdom might triumph through another woman and that our natural integrity might be clothed in the freedom of his divine glory and exult for ever in the gladness of his infinitely pure love.

Thomas Merton shows an attractively simple grasp of the great truths relating to the heights of holiness.

* * * *

EROS AND AGAPE are discussed by H. C. Graef in the *Supplement of La Vie Spirituelle* (February) as well as by G. Gilleman, S.J., in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (February).

THE IDEA OF SUBSTITUTION in the doctrine of Redemption is a subject

needing careful study and understanding in order to meet many modern difficulties regarding fundamental Christian principles. Fr David, O.F.M.Cap., tackles the problem competently in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (February).

CRUX (Epiphany Term: Vol. 4, No. 2). 'The Altar of the Three Saints', by E. Sarmiento, is a meditation on St Rose, Bl. Martin and Bl. John Massias, all venerated on one altar in the Dominican Church in Lima.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE TODAY by Fr John Morson (to be obtained from Mt St Bernard's Abbey, Leicester; 10d.) is a reprint of articles in *Pax* in which the author has usefully collected a great deal of unsuspected treasures from Pius XI and Pius XII on the subject of the life of contemplation.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Bloomsbury. S. M. Ansgar, O.P.: A Spring Painting Book, 2s. 6d.

Cerf. La Sainte Bible: L'Apocalypse, 160 frs.; Le Deuteronomé, 260 frs.; Le Livre de Josue, 160 frs.

Church Literature Association. Christopher Byron: The Christian Ascent, 6d.

Dobson. Jim Wilson: Redemption of the Common Life, 7s. 6d.

James Duffy. Theodore Crowley: Roger Bacon, 21s.

Gill (Dublin). Mary Beattie: Going God's Way, 4s.; James F. Cassidy: Our Lady's Missioner, 3s.

Mercier (Cork). Elizabeth Whitehead: Saints for the Married, 10s. 6d.; The Spiritual Testament of Sister Mary of the Trinity, 12s. 6d.

Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Killeshandra. Silver Sheaves, 7s. 6d.

Newman Press (U.S.A.). Joseph M. Collieran, C.S.S.R. (Trans.) St Augustine: The Greatness of the Soul, and The Teacher, \$3.00.

Nisbet. John H. S. Burleigh, D.D.: The City of God, 12s. 6d.

Pio Decimo Press. Walter Shewring: Royal Zion, \$1.00; Rembert Sorg, O.S.B.: God's Love Songs, 60c.; Towards a Benedictine Theology of Manual Labour, 50c.

Editions Spes (Paris). Mary Starkey-Greig (tr. Marie René-Bazin): Le Crouset et l'Amour, 270 frs.

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Contributors are encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers. *Literary Communications* should be addressed to The Editor, Life of the Spirit, Blackfriars, Oxford (Tel. 47221). The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted; and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Communications regarding Advertisements should be addressed to The Manager at the above address.

Subscriptions and Orders should also be sent to The Manager, Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford (Tel: 47221). Annual Subscription 12s.6d. post free (U.S.A. \$2.00).

Binding. Orders and Enquiries for binding volumes of the review may be sent to the Kemp Hall Bindery, 33 St Aldate's, Oxford.

Devaluation. In view of the change in currency, the annual subscription to LIFE OF THE SPIRIT is now reduced to TWO DOLLARS for the United States. Annual subscriptions of three dollars received since September 31st, 1949, will be extended for a further period of six months.