

MARRIAGE. By Bishop Von Streng. (Burns, Oates; 3s. 6d.)

Good Catholic literature on this subject is so scarce that a book which promises to deal frankly and sympathetically with adult problems must be eagerly welcomed. Perhaps there is no subject which needs to be so delicately as well as so frankly handled; nowhere is any suggestion of smugness, scrupulosity or saccharine 'spirituality' more repellent than in a book of this kind. The style in which the book is written will be of very great importance. While we cannot expect every author to write with the stark and scientific simplicity informed with tenderness which characterised T. G. Wayne's *Morals and Marriage*, it will be agreed that Bishop Von Streng is indeed fortunate in having a translator whose floweriness and verbosity are bound to alienate all sensitive readers. It would be tedious to enumerate the unfortunate and even incorrect renderings in which the book abounds, but surely someone might have warned the translator against the indiscriminate use of the word 'venerable' and against referring to the partners in a marriage as 'spouses' or even 'consorts'!

But we are convinced that the pietistic, the sentimental smack of the book is unjust to its author. For Bishop Von Streng is a sane and practical counsellor who shows himself vividly aware of the difficulties with which people have now to contend. His concern is with real people and real problems, and his advice is wise and moderate. The book should correct many false emphases, ideas which are more assumed than asserted, but which do so much to prevent the foundation of a sincere and integral Catholic outlook on sex among at any rate the younger generation.

The Bishop's *positive* attitude throughout the book is notable and refreshing. He shows that marriage can only be based on self-sacrifice and self-control, but he ends: 'Marriage comes as near to being a real paradise as may be expected on this earth overshadowed by original sin.'

MARGARET MURPHY.

## SCRIPTURAL BULLETIN

The two essays forming this pamphlet<sup>1</sup> have been published in view of a project planned by a group of ministers of the Church of England of working out a statement concerning the Inspiration and the Inerrancy of the Bible that should repre-

<sup>1</sup> *Towards Catholic Unity—II. The Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible.* P. J. Thompson, M.A., and H. E. Symonds, M.A., B.D. (S.P.C.K.; 1s.)

sent orthodox Anglican doctrine and serve to reconcile the views of 'those within the Church of England who claim the name of "Liberal Catholics" and those who are anti-Liberal and, in many cases, Papalist in outlook.' One cannot speculate on the chances of that outcome; but one can state the very welcome fact that the doctrine of the pamphlet is in substantial agreement with the terms of our own belief. It has been widely assumed in recent years that Roman Catholicism stands for a biblical doctrine that is obsolete and entirely unacceptable to the enlightened remainder of Christianity. Here, not only are the fundamental propositions of our faith upheld, but their Thomistic interpretation is strenuously propounded, even to that fine but crucial point of an insistence on Verbal Inspiration.

If a few criticisms may be offered, however, it can be said of the first essay that it gives a somewhat misleading account of the Thomistic view of the function of Inspiration as contrasted with the process of Revelation. Take the following propositions: (p. 15) 'There can be "degrees of revelation," since its result is human *knowledge* divinely qualified; but inspiration, since its result is human *action* similarly qualified, can show no distinct grades'; 'How a writer comes by his information does not, then, affect the question of his inspiration. His inspiration concerns simply his *communication* of that knowledge, which it endows with divine authority'; (p. 16), 'Biblical inspiration is not only finite, but restricted to certain particular effects: the production of a true record of divine revelation. But it is all-pervading and uniform. The King's Messenger has the same authority whether he conveys a declaration of war or a command to dine.' There is nothing said throughout the essay to prevent such statements from conveying the impression that the power of 'judgment' conferred on the sacred writer by means of Inspiration is no more than the technical skill to transmit faithfully certain truths of which he has previously become informed by a process upon which his Inspiration has no bearing. This departmental setting off of Revelation against Inspiration is untrue to the Thomistic teaching, according to which Inspiration *does* have to do with knowledge, that is to say, with 'speculative' knowledge of the truths that are the subject of the writing, and not merely with 'practical' knowledge concerning the proper way to transmit them faithfully. It has something to do, in short, with the process of the '*acceptio veritatum*'; not indeed with the first 'informing' of the mind by God with revelational data, but with the full active response to that, or in other words, with the full attainment of revelational knowledge.

So in the Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* the first effect of *Inspiration* is said to be: 'Ut ea omnia eaque sola, quae ipse (Deus) juberet, et recte mente conciperent,' etc. We ordinarily concede that the mind is only truly possessed of knowledge if it is possessed by it, i.e. if it has something like an inspired appreciation of its meaning. It is in the light of and under the pressure and control of a vision, a realisation of divine truth<sup>2</sup> that the sacred writer proceeds to his task. And it is this that makes him to be a co-author with God, and not merely His spokesman or translator. The Revelation that the Scriptures convey to us is thus intrinsically mediated by the active, conceiving minds of the human writers, as endowed, however, with divine Inspiration. It is very surprising to find it stated in the course of the second essay that: '. . . each of the writers of the Old Testament books is inspired either in virtue of a special gift of the Holy Spirit or as coming within the general influence of the Spirit as working on the People of God, and making them the recipients of divine revelation.'

In his treatment of the Inerrancy of the Scriptures the author of this second essay appeals to certain papal teaching in a way that misrepresents its meaning. The text in question is the *Providentissimus Deus* of Leo XIII, and the first mistake is one that concerns the meaning of the passage dealing with biblical 'science.' It is supposed that the following argument is there used: that inasmuch as science has nothing to do with the essential purpose of the Scriptures, which is that of revealing religious truth, it is unnecessary to suppose that the Bible should be infallible when it treats of scientific matters. ('We have no right to claim inerrancy for statements on matters of science,' says the present author.) There is a double misunderstanding here. First, it is explicitly stated two paragraphs further on in this same encyclical that the criterion of the inerrancy of the Bible is not to be sought for in the purpose that it pursues, but in the fact of its total inspiration. If God is its author throughout, any genuine error it might contain would be imputable to Him, and could not be simply dismissed as a human weakness. Accordingly there is no room in papal teaching for what has been called the 'obiter dicta' theory.

But secondly, the erroneous interpretation implies that the encyclical has allowed for something of error in the biblical account of scientific matters. This is not so. The argument of the encyclical is that because of their irrelevancy to the essential

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<sup>2</sup> One is here supposing that Revelation is his subject-matter. This is not always so, of course.

purpose of the Bible, God has made no *revelation* to the sacred writers concerning scientific truths, but has been content that they should treat of such matters according to their own primitive way of sense impression. They treat only of 'ea quae sensibiliter apparent.' Their affirmations are true inasmuch as they do justice to the realities of the order with which alone they are concerned. Such truth may be *relative*, but it is truth all the same.

The other main point on which this essay is at variance with and unconsciously misrepresents papal teaching is joined up with the above issue and concerns the same section in the encyclical. Incidentally it may be remarked that the author's view is one that has been held by a number of Catholic scholars, previous to its condemnation in Benedict XV's encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*. It is the sense of the famous pronouncement running, 'Haec ipsa deinde . . . iuvabit transferri,' that is in question; and the mistake consists in interpreting it to mean that one may be prepared to judge of the history of the Bible in the same way that one has judged of its science. The history like the science may prove to have only a relative truth, that namely of a correspondence with facts 'as they appeared'—as they were presented in legend or tradition or popular belief, etc.—and not as they actually happened. In the authentic interpretation supplied by the later encyclical, however, the 'Haec iuvabit transferri' has the meaning only of a broad recommendation that the same critical-mindedness that has been employed in judging of the character of biblical 'science' should be brought to bear likewise upon its history; and the above interpretation is elaborately excluded. It is important to appreciate that what is rejected is the validity of applying the distinction Relative (or Apparent) versus Absolute parallel-wise to the science and the history. The difference between the two orders is that whereas statements about the world of nature although not penetrating to the inner, strictly scientific reality, can yet be said to be true in their own way if they correspond to the appearances of things, historical affirmations are quite simply false if they fail to record what actually took place. It is only if the author's deliberate purpose is to provide a merely traditional or popular account, etc., that it becomes possible to introduce the notion of relative truth. That is the difference; and there is nothing in the encyclical that condemns the proper use of the appeal to 'Tacit Quotation,' etc. Only, to assert a simple parity between the science and the history is to undo the history. The 'science' of the Bible is innocent of the meaning

of true science, but its history cannot plead ignorance of what is meant by *facts*.

There are various other views or expressions to be found in this pamphlet with which one could not agree, but they are either comparatively unimportant or irrelevant to the main issue. Concerning this main issue one may perhaps again express the deep satisfaction of finding here a statement that is so largely in unison with our own doctrine.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

## NOTICES

REALISME THOMISTE ET CRITIQUE DE LA CONNAISSANCE. By Etienne Gilson. (J. Vrin, Paris; 20 frs.)

'Au fond, peu de réalistes critiques s'engagent vraiment dans la critique; c'est pourquoi ils jugent si faciles d'en sortir.' In his first six chapters M. Gilson dissects with great care and courtesy some attempts to construct a 'critical realism,' and not only finds them wanting, but inevitably doomed to failure. For the very words are either tautological or contradictory. 'Critical' in fact means either 'philosophical,' and is a wholly superfluous epithet, or brings with it idealist presuppositions which must vitiate the realism it is made to qualify. The last two chapters, *Le Sujet Connaissant* and *L'Appréhension de l'Existence* give a realist account of realism, by contrast to those which are at heart, albeit unwillingly, idealist. They emphasize the union of intellect and senses in the *suppositum*, and the formal, actual, character of existence. The whole book provides a magnificent statement of the reality of the object of Metaphysics, and one incidental, several times recurring theme which one would expect from M. Gilson is the value of the history of philosophy.

I.T.

TWO ENGLISH CARMELITES. By Sister Anne Hardman, S.N.D. (Burns, Oates; 7s. 6d.)

This book is a further contribution by Sister Anne Hardman, S.N.D., not only to the history of the English Carmelites, but to English Church History. Much has already been done to illustrate the lives of hundreds of English men and women who served God in a foreign cloister, because one at home was for-