name becomes brittle and hard to sustain. A fuller bonding is required for this virtue's flourishing. Of course not all bonds are good merely because they are strong. If they were, either tribal or fascistic societies would be our *beau idéal*. That is why the Coronation rite, and the form of public life which flows from it, has to be adequately controlled by the Judeo-Christian revelation and the reasonable humanism it sponsors. At that rite, Queen Elizabeth II was invested with (among other things) the *baculus*, the dove-surmounted sceptre which represents equity and mercy. It is the task of the king to represent an equity which the common law and the statute law may at times fail to uphold. Ian Bradley should note that, if this is to be our public doctrine, an apology for the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 would be fitting. *Floreat rosa alba.*

AIDAN NICHOLS OP

THE CONVERSION OF EDITH STEIN by Florent Gaboriau, translation and preface by Ralph McInerny, *St Augustine's Press,* **South Bend, Indiana, 2002. Pp. xi + 136, £9.00 hbk.**

This short and attractively presented book intersperses extracts from its subject's writings with what may best be described as biographical meditations on the significance of her conversion viewed under three headings: her Jewish background, feminist leanings and philosophical calling.

'Calling' might be the sufficient word for all these, because the categorization is, in the view of this reader, over-laboured. Stein had long given up the Jewish practice maintained by her widowed and much loved mother, when a night's reading of Teresa of Avila (herself, as is now known, part-Jewish) convinced her that 'This is the Truth'. Nonetheless, it was in the context of the ancestral faith that Edith, youngest of seven children surviving out of eleven births, was able to apprehend the logic and entailments of the incarnation of the God of Israel. She thus points up for our age an important and long obscured truth which Gaboriau allows to emerge: namely that Judaism, as it was historically, so it remains conceptually *the* incomparable preparation for the gospel.

Stein's philosophical writings and teaching in the university of Freiburg i.B., where she was a student and 'assistant' of the phenomenologist Husserl, and later as professor with the Dominicans at Speyer, revealed a discriminating intellect, the limitations of which she herself became particularly conscious after her late encounter with Aquinas, whose *Quaestiones Disputatae* she translated into German. Perhaps the distinction of her mind is most evident in her feminist writings, speeches and broadcasts, strikingly ahead of her time in the Germany of the 1930s. Canonised on 11 October 1998 and declared a Patron of Europe by a pope who shares much of her philosophical background and approach, Edith

Stein was judged to have earned that symbol of peace and love, the martyr's 'palm', having been snatched from Carmelite seclusion in Echt (Holland) for deportation to Auschwitz and the gas chamber. Three years previously she had offered herself as a 'victim for peace', and when her superiors sought means to extract her from the trap that was closing, she urged: 'Do not do it!...Is it not right that I should gain no advantage from my baptism?...' Premonitory also of her destiny, as is well brought out in Gaboriau's report of what can be known of her last days, was her name chosen in religion—Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. The book ends with the text of the pope's homily at the canonisation, in itself well worth the having. John Paul II notes that 'alongside Teresa of Avila and Thérèse of Lisieux, another Teresa takes her place among the host of saints who do honour to the Carmelite Order'. Insisting that we 'remember the Shoah', he presents 'this eminent daughter of Israel and faithful daughter of the Church' as a witness for truth and 'martyr for love'—the love of Christ which, in her words, 'knows no borders'. The pope concluded with the wish that this witness 'constantly strengthen the bridge of mutual understanding between Jews and Christians'.

On being arrested with her similarly converted sister Rosa, Edith prophesied the significance of their fate as being 'for our people'. A relevance she could not have foreseen is to the battle that has been joined for and against the character of the then pope. The Dutch bishops had recently denounced the Nazis: all those rounded up with the Stein sisters were converted Jews, while they alone of their extensive family did not escape the exterminators. All in all, this introduction to a, by any account, remarkable woman, as well as a saint for our times, is to be commended both for its compendiousness and the freshness of its approach. Inexplicably, given that the translator of Gaboriau's French is a well known American philosopher and writer of fiction, an often laboured English style and odd failures in syntax can leave some passages obscure: readily verified examples are the first sentence of chapter 2 and the last of chapter 4. But perhaps some blemishes even serve to point out the animating lustre of the saint herself upon these few pages; if most especially upon those of her own authorship. Among these I single out the concluding meditation on light shining in darkness, 'The Hidden Life and the Epiphany'.

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