

The assumption appears to be that a society is more than a unity of relation—*multitudo*—and that consequently it may be understood in terms of such concepts as *solidarity*, interpreted not in a moral sense but naturalistically: a sort of gravitational attraction. On the contrary, it may be urged (with some support, perhaps, from Professor Evans-Pritchard's recent lectures on *Social Anthropology*) that the intelligibility of any society is realised primarily in the moral experience of the individual members of the society and of the anthropological investigator: that the metaphysical basis of anthropology is the possibility of *communication* between investigator and investigated as moral beings. Professor Srinivas offers a coherent and technically admirable account of Coorg society; but one wonders whether any educated Coorg who might read the book would recognise his own experience there. C.E.

MAGIE DES EXTRÊMES: Les Etudes Carmélitaines. (Bruges; Desclée de Brouwer; 105 frs.)

In the minds of the tireless and prolific editors of *Les Etudes Carmélitaines*, the 'Magic of Extremes' labels a remarkable variety of goods and evils—more comprehensive even than the 'Enthusiasm' of Mgr Knox. Even an article (and very good it is) on 'The Certainty of the Assumption' finds a place, on the dubious pretext that, 'cette "magie des extrêmes", le Pape Pie XII lui-même n'y pas échappé.' The alcoholics, existentialists, drug-addicts, psycho-analysts, theosophists, jazz-fiends and painters with a 'besoin de paroxysme' who, we learn, are likewise victims of this sorcery, may be surprised, but little comforted, to find themselves in the company of a Pope speaking *ex cathedra*.

There is plenty of sense in Georges Buraud's 'Les Magies de l'ésotérisme nouveau'—but he is too sweeping and unconstructive altogether. Sound, but inadequate, is André Derumaux's brief essay on 'The religious Deviations of the Taste for Excess'. Then we settle down to sober and engaging factual studies on mysticism in ancient Egypt and modern India. There follows the inevitable 'Mystique hindoue, mystique chrétienne', for the comfort and reassurance of the baffled and deflated Christian ego. Though enlivened, but also fogged, by amiable conversations between the Carmelite author and a swami of the Ramakrishna Mission, the examination of Yoga is conducted on conventional lines, 'toute grâce surnaturelle étant par hypothèse écartée'. Until this *hypothèse* (and perhaps its rational or emotional motivation) has been questioned, analysed and criticised, little progress is to be expected in this inquiry.

Interleaved are 'paroxysmic' reproductions and pronouncements from Picabia, Dali, Georges Mathieu and Henri Michaux. Salvador Dali, fresh from 'paroxysms' of nuclear bombardments and 'une rage de précision' offers a second pronouncement before plunging himself in isolation in Spain, 'l'Esprit-Saint et l'ascé-

tisme total'. (He has, 'pour la première fois du monde', been designing an electron, a proton, a meson, a pi-meson, 'et même la structure molle par excellence—de cette novissime "glu cosmique" de laquelle je parle souvent de manière presque obsessionnelle'. We are also given a photograph of his dramatic *Christ de Saint-Jean-de-la-Croix* which is contributing so expensively to the culture of Glasgow, if not to the painter's association.

There are excellent individual contributions to this volume, such as we have learned to expect from *Les Etudes carmélitaines*. The *ensemble* is very cultured, very contemporary, very *chic*, very *parisien*; yet somehow a trifle snobbish, even a trifle priggish, and more than a trifle absurd. Perhaps we only expose our own stuffiness and English insularity when we whisper that it is not quite what we look for from Carmelite editorship and guidance.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS? By Thomas Merton. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 15s.)

In writing this short biography of St Lutgarde, the Cistercian mystic of Aywières, Thomas Merton was satisfying the claims of family. Undertaken before *Elected Silence*, it was certainly a task presenting no little difficulty, and he has carried it out with some success. The atmosphere of those numerous convents in the Low Countries which in the thirteenth century came under Cistercian influence is hard to convey. They represent both the strength and the weakness of the movement, held for a moment in a delicate equilibrium. Since St Gertrude speaks so eloquently for herself, she may safely be taken as a reliable, if somewhat sophisticated guide to the feeling of the period. One grasps at once the underlying sanity springing from a well-grounded monastic and liturgical tradition, and also the less admirable tendency to a multiplicity of often quite fanciful devotions which, in religious less holy and intelligent than the saints of whom we are speaking, could easily degenerate into somewhat childish piety, disconnected from any solid understanding of doctrine. An unadorned translation of the life of St Lutgarde, written with considerable verve by her Dominican confessor, Thomas Cantimpré, would have shown the same factors at work. (The reference to this life in the 1867 edition of the *Acta Sanctorum* should incidentally read June iv, not June ii.) Thomas Merton has, however, preferred to retell the story, using his own undeniable gift for straight narrative. If this has involved some sacrifice of local colour, perhaps he was justified in not straining after it, for as he feels it necessary to say towards the end of the book, 'these . . . mystics with whom we have mostly been dealing do not present the pure Cistercian spirituality that characterised the first century of the Order's history'; and that first century gave all the rest the very breath of life.