

THE GOLDEN HEART. By John Beevers. (Browne & Nolan; 5s.)

Beauraing seems destined to be one of the great shrines of our Lady. It appears to bear all the marks of authenticity that we see in Lourdes and Fatima, and with full ecclesiastical approval the pilgrimages grow in number.

Our Lady appeared to five children in 1932, and told them that she desired a chapel in the place where they saw her; the drabest place, incidentally, that ever had a vision of our Lady. The opposition, though of much the same kind as at Lourdes and Fatima, was less violent. A special characteristic of our Lady's promise here is that she will convert sinners.

It is fortunate that Mr Beevers was chosen for the narrative. He can always be trusted to give us an objective account, and to weigh evidence fairly. But it is the popularization of the Apparitions, rather than their evidence (which is now beyond reasonable doubt), that is important, and in this too the author is more than adequate. It is impossible to read this account without feeling an increased trust in Mary, and an increased gratitude to God for sending his mother to the world with his message of prayer and penance, and his promise of final triumph.

The author has an interesting suggestion that the beginning of the fulfilment of our Lady's promises may be seen in recent events in Russia.

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EXTRACTS

MRS BISHOP writes of the Sisters of Jesus Crucified in *The Commonwealth* for January 4th. The Congregation was founded twenty-five years ago in France exclusively for sick people who would otherwise never have been able to realize their religious vocation.

These religious are sisters of Jesus in that they are themselves crucified daily in their own bodies; all the sisters of the Congregation are sick, and they minister to each other without help from healthy people other than physicians and surgeons. . . . The rule is that of St Benedict, 'Ora et Labora ut regnet', and the sisters really follow it. This is not a sanatorium with a chapel; this is authentic monastic life. Seven times a day the sisters chant the divine Office; daily they participate in a dialogue Mass. . . . They all work (some of them for as short a time as fifteen minutes a day) and all participate in running the community and in providing for it. The sisters do secretarial work, tutor, operate dispensaries, print in Braille, bind books, and raise fruit, vegetables and flowers. The housework and cooking have to be done, since there are no lay sisters. Not least of

their duties, the sisters take care of and help each other; the paralysed can dictate to the blind, the deaf can help the paralysed. . . .

The sisters are not allowed to bother about their own ailments: all that is left to the superiors. So the sisters are encouraged in a spirit of true detachment from the suffering which thus becomes redemptive and spiritually curative for the world at large. This unique congregation has lately opened a house in the United States and it is prospering in many ways. Perhaps other countries will now follow the lead, for every country has its chronic sufferers for whom religious life is otherwise debarred.

Spiritual Life, the quarterly from the Carmelites of Brooklyn, has produced its most provocative and important number so far in its December issue which is devoted to the power (as well as the present shortcomings) of the diocese and parish for building up the spiritual life of the faithful. Archbishop Cushing, who is known the world over as one of the most spiritually-minded of the Catholic hierarchy, deals with the Diocese.

It might seem that the Church's function of ruling has become predominant over its functions of teaching and sanctifying, and that these latter functions afford little more than a respectable pretext for establishing and maintaining far-flung and closely integrated organizations whose ultimate purpose is realized in the material influence which it exercises in contemporary society. The Church has, indeed, been compared to a 'big business'. . . . Great statesmen whose interests are avowedly secularistic have given material support to the Church because they have learned from experience that the Church's power has a value which can be measured on the tickers of the Stock Exchange and in the results of political campaigns.

His Grace goes on to say that it should be a matter of grave concern that the efforts of those supporting the Church are in danger not only of misinterpretation but also of a disastrous integration with the godless trends of modern political and social philosophy.

If we do not direct our efforts towards the spiritual objectives of the Church's ministry, our pride in the external growth of the Church becomes sinful and our programmes of Catholic Action will lose the respect of thinking men. Worse still, in trying to build the Church as a façade which covers no inner spiritual framework, we are sacrificing the essential element which alone can assure the Church's survival amid the accidents of human history.

The Archbishop of Boston then turns the reader's eye to the early Church, which was in all essentials the same as today.

The modern diocese, with its offices and agencies and highly developed organization, if it corresponds to the divine plan which alone

can lead it to success, must fulfil the same function which was fulfilled in the early Church by the groups which gathered round each of the Apostles.

He insists that we must seek the essential element of the diocese as a unit of the Church, as it was in the days of its foundation, and cease to be fascinated by the external and complicated organization which now meets the eye.

First, last and always the bishop is a spiritual leader, and in every function of his office he aims ultimately to bring his people into closer union with Christ our Lord in the depth of their own souls. These are powerful words from a bishop of great integrity. The Editor, in his introductory remarks to the issue, emphasizes the fact that the time has come when we must cease from the preoccupation of defending and preserving the Church, and turn our attention to the 'leaven of the whole mass'. In the diocese and in the parish Christ lives for all men, working among them all for their sanctification.

Another outstanding leader of the Church, Cardinal Gerlier, in a lecture at Brussels last year, underlined this point trenchantly in showing the benefits of the Christian living day by day in the midst of non-Christians. (The lecture is published in full in English in the autumn 1956, issue of *Cross Currents* under the title 'The Co-existence of Believers and Unbelievers'.) The Christian is brought face to face with the non-believer who is full of delicacy, true sympathy and human understanding; and it makes him think again of the nature and efficacy of his own faith.

At the present hour the real way to be a believer is to place oneself in the place of the unbelievers, the non-Christians, those who do not practise their religion, and look at their difficulties, their objections, their indifferences, and even their hostility with an intelligent and fraternal sympathy. We should never cast suspicion on their profound good faith, even if their behaviour suggests bad faith.

The reader would do well to further his understanding of these great cirenic and fully Christian ideals by turning to *La Vie Spirituelle* for January, which is mainly devoted to 'Judge Not'—that very serious command of our Lord's which is so seldom heeded. The issue is welcome particularly as dealing both theologically and practically with a moral weakness which is too prevalent and too much ignored among Christians today.