

REVIEWS

OUR ETERNAL VOCATION. By a Carmelite Nun. (Sands; 7s. 6d.)

Many readers who have no time to study the works of De Caussade or of St John of the Cross will welcome this practical little book, and even those who are familiar with the classics of the spiritual life will value this application of eternal truths to everyday problems.

The author's former book, *God and Rosanne*, was intended chiefly for postulants and novices, but this book is for everyone. It is a treatise on 'how to live', based on the sure way of St Thérèse of Lisieux: how to live in time, in relation to eternity. As the author tells us: 'In setting out on any journey, the great thing is to know beforehand precisely where one is going' (p. 45), and, having considered the goal, she then discusses the difficulties and demands of the undertaking. 'Holiness' is 'a debt which we owe not only to God, but also to the whole world' (p. 38); the success of the 'lantern-bearers' (p. 12 & passim) depends more on what they *are* than on what they *do*; full use must be made of the means of grace for there will be danger of self-deception and need for sincerity, for holding fast to the true standard of values, and, above all, there will be the need to know how to turn the daily, hourly trials into many stepping-stones on the way.

The chapters on religious life in the Cloister show wide and varied experience; they are characterised by a quiet humour and a generous measure of Teresian commonsense. In writing of the contemplative life in particular, the author stresses its apostolic and intercessory value; she also includes three pages on the spirit of Carmel which will be treasured by all who love the Order. Though parts of the earlier sections of the book sometimes fail to hold the attention of the reader, the concluding chapters provide ample compensation. The discussion on the Groundwork of Prayer is especially valuable, and the final chapters on St Thérèse and her mission deserve the highest praise.

But if sanctity is our proper vocation and aim, we must ask the meaning of the term. The answer is to be found in the story on page 194. This answer alone is well worth the book! M. M. GRACE

A PROCESSION OF SAINTS. By James Brodrick, S.J. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

Whoever read Father Brodrick's sketches of saints when they appeared during 1946 in the *Clergy Review* will need no urging to buy and re-read them in their collected form. The procession displays a saint for every month of the year, all of them English by birth or adoption: and for good measure is added an essay on the Venerable Marie-of-the-Incarnation, French Ursuline. But though she became 'a sort of spiritual conquest of the British Empire'

when Wolfe captured Quebec and her shrine, and though Father Brodrick's account of this most remarkable woman is full of interest, it is possible to feel that her inclusion spoils the homogeneity of the book.

'The saints of England, whether Saxon, Norman, Plantagenet or Tudor, were peculiarly lovable. About that there can be no two opinions, and the more's the pity that they are not better known and honoured.' Indeed, what do we know of, what honour do we give to, Aelred and Anselm, Godric and Thomas of Hereford, Hugh of Avalon, Witham and Lincoln, the Irish Colman and Aidan? Every recurring June after 1939 this reviewer hoped to hear some reference from the pulpit to the apostle of the Germans, Winfrid Boniface of Devonshire; and never a word came. Yet Father Brodrick boldly says that, 'A very strong case indeed could be made out for regarding St Boniface as the greatest Englishman that was ever born. . . .'

Well, Father Brodrick enables many to make good their deficiencies in this respect. It is well known by now that he is a writer of very great charm, wit and humour, allusiveness and learning, persuasion and piety—and occasionally of 'cheek'. An attractive point in this book is that the numerous quotations from Bede the Venerable are given from Stapleton's translation of 1565. Father Brodrick is, too, a master of the minor art of the footnote. On pp. 62-63, for example, he resurrects the memory of that remarkable character Father Joseph Stevenson, S.J. But, whatever the late Canon William Barry's shortcomings as a writer of history, we are sorry that in another footnote Father Brodrick for once lacks urbanity and allows himself to impute to him the motive of 'playing up' to a Protestant audience. 'At the present time, we are often told by preachers and others what scum we are, but with all our iniquities we can claim moral superiority in some respects over the highest ecclesiastics, including the popes themselves, of the thirteenth century.' That and what follows might have been written by Canon Barry. It was in fact written by Father Brodrick in the book under review, and is a good example of his frank expression of honest judgments.

How welcome would be from Father Brodrick's pen a full-length life of any one of these dozen saints. But then I am also hoping that one day he will tackle Father Robert Persons.

DONALD ATTWATER

A YEAR WITH SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES. By DCM Cuthbert, O.S.B. (Douglas Organ; 7s. 6d.)

It is always a pleasure to welcome a book on St Francis de Sales, especially when the Saint is allowed to speak for himself. This book aims at giving 'a minimum dose of daily spiritual reading for anyone who is too busy for more' and at supplying a need for a simple meditation book.