

EXTRACTS

DOM COLUMBA MARMION, 'a master of the spiritual life', is the subject of the January number of *La Vie Spirituelle* (obtainable from Blackfriars Publications, 1s. 6d.). The sources of Dom Marmion's teaching are considered—Dom Rousseau writes on the biblical element, Père Buzy on the importance of St Paul and Dom Beauduin on the Liturgy. An unpublished paper by Dom Marmion on 'Christ, the ideal of the Priest' is included and has all the objective Christocentric strength of his other writings. Further essays on Dom Marmion's contribution to modern spirituality include an estimate of his importance by Abbot Capelle.

The significance of Dom Marmion, the abbot suggests, lies in three aspects of his teaching. First of all, his insistence on the radical importance of the divine adoption, though obviously in one sense an innovation, was the key to everything he wrote.

It was for him the radiant centre from which all else derived and to which it must return. His view was not that of a system but, on the contrary, that of the most living truth, directly intelligible to the soul.

In the second place, all his teaching was deeply rooted in the concrete demands of the moral life.

Spiritual theory, however noble or true, must be confirmed, as must everything that is abstract, powerless as it is by itself to rouse men or to sustain them. With Dom Marmion we are gripped by something concrete, for he is astonishingly practical, direct, living. Man, with his feelings and affections, aspires to life rather than to thought. He will only give himself to someone who will accept him as he is, in the fulness of his being.

Finally, it is through his simplicity that Dom Marmion has made the spiritual life available to countless thousands, religious and lay persons alike, who were discouraged by the systematisation so characteristic of the spirituality in vogue when he began to write.

The widespread appeal of his writings is undoubtedly due to the powerful ease with which the most sublime truths are presented.

The editor of *La Vie Spirituelle* claims with justice that Dom Marmion did more than anyone else to release spirituality from the sentimental and subjective mood which too often was characteristic of the piety of the end of the last century. He restored the great traditions of a strong spiritual teaching based on the Bible, the Liturgy and the Fathers. Twenty-five years have passed since Dom Columba Marmion died, and they have seen a deepening realisation

of the truths that he taught with such confidence—and with such humility.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS concerning the religious state are considered by Père Creusen in *La Revue des Communautés Religieuses*. Answering the argument that 'Marriage is a sacrament, while a religious profession has not that dignity', he shows that

The objection seems to suggest that the sacraments are necessarily the highest graces that God has to give. What should we have to say in that case of our Lady, whose pre-eminent sanctity—assuredly a work of divine grace—denied her access to several sacraments, and certainly that of Penance. Would her state of life have been holier had she been able to receive the sacramental graces of Penance? . . . It is not the dignity of sacramental grace that enables us to resolve the question of the comparative excellence of religious chastity and the married state. The mind of the Church is clear: she affirms the supremacy of virginity.

The latest supplement of *La Vie Spirituelle* (No. 3; obtainable from Blackfriars Publications, 4s. 6d.) continues its valuable work of providing documentation on ascetical and spiritual subjects. There are articles on Mystical Knowledge by Père Thomas Philippe, O.P., on the Mysticism of Aldous Huxley by Father Gerald Vann, O.P., and an original study of the Kingship of Christ in French Spirituality of the 18th century by Dom Jean Leclercq. Of more specialised interest are papers on the psychological aspects of religious vocation, and there is an outspoken article on 'The Recruitment of Religious Orders', with some suggestions as to why many congregations, especially of women, are finding difficulty in attracting the subjects they need.

THE 'ADESTE FIDELES' is the subject of an important essay by Dom John Stephan, O.S.B. (Buckfast Abbey Publications, 2s. 6d.). This study on its origin and development shows that the most popular of Christian hymns—it is not a carol—was written and composed by John Francis Wade, 'teacher of Latin and Church song' at the English College, Douay, in the mid-eighteenth century. Aided by the recent discovery of a musical MS. book containing the hymn, Dom Stephan pursues a fascinating series of clues and comes to what seems a certain conclusion as to its authorship.

ACTIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE ORDERS were considered by Thomas Merton, himself a Cistercian, in a recent number of *Commonweal*, the American Catholic weekly. Arguing from St Thomas's words on the primacy of the 'mixed' life (cf. II-II. 188. 6) he concludes:

St Thomas is teaching us that the so-called mixed vocation can

only be superior to the contemplative vocation if it is itself *more contemplative*. This conclusion is inescapable. It imposes a tremendous obligation. St Thomas is really saying that Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites must be super-contemplatives.

THE LATEST TWO VOLUMES in the Liturgical Albums series published by *Les Editions du Cerf* are devoted to Holy Week and the Sacrament of Marriage. (Each 1s. 3d. from Blackfrairs Publication.) Once again the liturgical reality is made concrete and applicable through the use of illustrations and a textual commentary that is readable and relevant.

The condition of a liturgical revival is not so much an awareness of the historical and aesthetic elements in the official prayer of the Church—important and revealing as these are: rather is it a question of bringing the truth that is deeply embedded in the liturgical *mysterium* into the consciousness of an actual Catholic life.

PÆGUSTATOR