

concerns himself with fact, not fiction, and in *THE SUN HER MANTLE* (Browne and Nolan; 15s.) he describes, using all the available evidence, the nine appearances of our Lady during the last century. These, he tells us, are as important as any other major international event like a world war, if only because they have affected millions of people all over the world. Most space is devoted to the apparitions of La Salette, and readers should buy the book for that alone as it is hardly described elsewhere in English. Mr Beevers may at first seem rather credulous, but a closer reading will show that he is repeating evidence given of apparitions approved by ecclesiastical authority. He reserves his comments to the last chapter.

In 1950 Mgr Knox preached a course of Lenten conferences in Westminster Cathedral, which were published by the C.T.S. Now they make a welcome reappearance as *ST PAUL'S GOSPEL* (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.). As one would expect, the style is lively, each conference is a well-shaped unity, and the series forms an artistic whole. *St Paul's Gospel* means, of course, not a narrative of Jesus's earthly life, which he presupposes, but the present life of Christ, who died for us and rose, and by which we live; it is the gospel of the new creation, Christ in his Body, the Church. It should entice us to make the Apostle our daily bread. When we lay down this introduction, we should take up his writings, in the original if may be, or in Mgr Knox's own translation, and nourish our spiritual life with them.

## EXTRACTS

*CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE* is the subject of a recent and interesting French book, commented on in *Etudes* (May). It is vital matter for those concerned to understand the fullness of Christian life, and one that despite its importance in questions dealing with the non-Catholic attitude to the Church has not received the attention it deserves. Outside the Church people put all the stress upon the experience of Christ and of divine things and they regard the Church as despising and even suppressing by its legalism the true feelings of salvation or of the presence of Christ. Inside the Church it often seems to be only those psychologically suited to certain types of prayer who are at all concerned with the question. The author of the book refuses to be led into the details of mystical experience and the like, but shows the fundamental duality of the experience which is proper to a full Christian life: the Christian is both active and passive in his personal awareness of God's activity. The reviewer sums up this part of the book:

Christian experience should not be purely *empirical*, a summary of conscious states, nor even simply *experimental*, co-ordinating and en-

couraging the parts of that experience, in order to study them in the light of psychology. It is *experiential*, 'that is to say an experience taken in its personal totality, with all its structural elements and all its moving power; an experience founded and seized in the clarity of a balanced conscience and in the generosity of a fully given love: in short, a completely *personal* experience in the strict sense of the word.'

This may be difficult to understand, but the reviewer continues later:

The experience of our union with Christ is not limited to a confident certainty of salvation, which assures us on the last analysis, of our incorporation in the Church. It implies also, in the 'christian interior life' as well as in action, the consciousness of being a member. The Christian lives in Christ, and Christ lives in the Christian: this gift of faith, present in a fervent spiritual life, cannot fail to have an echo in consciousness. 'Christian consciousness' is the consciousness of being a member, for Christ is his beginning and his end, the power that orientates him, his norm that is realised, his absolute fullness, his infinite limit.

So centred in Christ, as a member of Christ, the Christian is aware of more than individualistic emotion, conviction of salvation out of touch with the wholeness of his life. It is the experience that every Christian should be able to sense in his life in Christ and in the Church. This is what the faith should mean to us all.

A Plea for 'A unitary and sacramental concept of the world' is recorded in the FRIENDS QUARTERLY (April) as having been made by a scientist. And the Quaker Editor goes on to enlarge on the need for such a sacramental view. It sometimes happens that the non-Catholic regards the seven sacraments as limiting this view of the world to a few elementary things like bread, water, oil, and the like. In the middle ages there was a hierarchic view of the sacraments—all the world was an outward sign of the divinity, of the presence of the Trinity who has the power of the world to divinise man. But there was a time when all this signification was brought to a head in Christ Jesus, the unique 'sacred sign', in that his human nature was one with the divine, and in kissing Christ's body, we kiss God. This again was shared by the body of Christ on earth—all the faithful; and the Church is preserved as 'the sign', by the seven signs which bring her her life-grace. But then come the things that are made or used to remind man of the presence of the Word, from crucifixes to the smallest pebble on the pathway of No. 1 Acacia Villas in the desolate heart of suburbia. This is the unitary concept of the world which draws every scientific fact discovered into its net. Without the hierarchy, without the seven shining stars round the sun and the moon, none of the rest of the universe will be easily discernible as a sign of hidden divinity. But

it is good to see that many people are seeking to rediscover that sacramental view which inspired the hearts of our ancestors.

The modern belief in visions and locutions seems to grow. A new vision comes to hand, that occurred in 1931 to the Polish Sister Faustina. Our Lord is said to have appeared to her in a special manner and told her to paint what she saw that the whole world might venerate the appearance. He taught Sister Faustina many things verbally including an ejaculation the grammar of which has something of the strangeness of 'I am the Immaculate Conception'. She was taught to say: 'O Blood and Water, which has gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in Thee'. He also declared to her: 'Distrust of souls tears at my bosom. The lack of confidence in chosen souls hurts me most.' And then, when the picture was painted: 'I promise that the soul that will venerate this picture will not perish . . .'. The whole series of revelations centred round the Mercy of Christ's Heart and he wished that a novena be observed from Good Friday to Low Sunday ending on that day with a feast of his Mercy. Of course the visions may have been perfectly genuine for Sister Faustina, but it is too easy to cite the highest authority, beyond which there seems no appeal, in order to popularise one's own personal fancies and spiritual specialities. Anyone with a spurious devotion could surely make the same sort of claims. Who is to check the actual word of our Lord? Actually our Lord has instituted an appeal beyond these private words and visions, to his living word in the Church based on his words of revelation. These private visions can be subjected to the test of his public and certain teaching. And it is surely necessary so to test Sister Faustina's vision, which seems both untheological and unliturgical.

It is good to see *Young Worker* again. This 'organ of the Young Christian Workers' can only appear, owing to financial difficulties, from time to time, but it always manages to make a good show for Labour Day. This is a paper edited and organised by the young workers themselves but it should be supported by every Christian because of its opportunity of assisting the re-formation of industry on a Christian basis. If it had this support it would be able to appear every week—eventually we hope every day.