

the stigmatics known to us (he excludes, of course, St Francis) we find shadow, a troubling contradiction of signs, uncertainty, lack of limpidity, a mingling of the human with the preternatural, of the marvellous and the unhealthy. Even though the trial may not harm these persons, still they do not come out of it humanly enlarged.' (Vol. II, p. 353.)

It is a great asset of this synthesis that it is not restricted to St Teresa alone, but makes ample use not only of St John of the Cross, but also of St Teresa of Lisieux, while not overlooking such a fine exponent of Carmelite spirituality as Elizabeth of the Trinity. The chief drawback of the work, however, which will deter prospective readers, seems to us its size. This is not so much due to the vast field covered as to the many repetitions and unnecessary pious reflections. The blurb claims that the book 'goes far towards breaking down the artificial barriers between the laity and those dedicated by profession to religious life'. Unfortunately only a very small section of the laity will be able to understand it, because the language is throughout the technical language of 'professional' spiritual books, taking for granted a thorough familiarity on the part of the reader with the Carmelite terminology of active and passive nights, spiritual betrothals, analogical acts and so forth. This, we may add, is not the fault of the translation (by Sister M. Verda Clare, c.s.c.) which, though not brilliant, is adequate. The two volumes, then, though not suitable for the general reader, form an admirable textbook of Carmelite spirituality that will prove a reliable guide for those who would penetrate more deeply into the world of St Teresa and St John of the Cross.

HILDA C. GRAEF

*THE ARCHBISHOP AND THE LADY.* By Michael de la Bedoyere. (Collins; 16s.)

In this very readable and well documented study, the author gives us a valuable and intimate exposition of the remarkable spiritual friendship between a strange lady, Mde Guyon, and the gifted Archbishop Fenelon. The exchange of letters between these two earnest souls would not have been of interest to others had not her teaching provoked the ire of Bossuet, and led to a mighty controversy between the two Archbishops, and to the condemnation by Rome of some of Fenelon's writings. The author makes it clear that he is on the side of Fenelon and the lady, but he gives enough evidence for an independent judgment. Many readers will share Bossuet's instinctive distrust for this woman who exercised such an extraordinary influence over so many intelligent people, and who caused so much trouble wherever she went. Of her own orthodoxy and sincerity there can be no doubt, though she often expresses herself in exaggerated language that at times seems almost blasphemous (p. 119), and is never far removed from Quietism. On the other hand

Bossuet's methods are far from blameless. He uses her confidential letters in public controversy without her permission, and always to her detriment. But it cannot be denied that he was as sincere as she was, and genuinely felt that her brand of mysticism was dangerous, and that its effects on others would prove pernicious in the extreme. For she was not content with the hidden life of a mystic, but was determined to form a spiritual *élite*, especially in Court circles.

But the main interest for readers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* is the vivid picture of the spiritual climate of seventeenth-century France—the France in which so many Orders of nuns have their origin. Here we see the flight from the liturgy, the reckless production of ready-made and highly emotional mystical formulas, imposed on communities as a substitute for the Divine Office. These personal and extravagant effusions, that few could recite with conviction, were obstinately clung to by successive generations of nuns as though they were the very oracle of God, and acquired by constant repetition a quite fictitious sacredness. Even Fenelon could write that 'it was a strange thing that those who wanted to follow a way which meant being attached to nothing should be so attached to the way itself and those who counselled it'. (p. 97.) Perhaps Bossuet, whose stomach was turned whenever he read her book (p. 107), saw further into the future than did Fenelon, and was less concerned with the fate of one innocent woman than with the health and sanity of the many who followed her.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

CONFIRMATION STORIES. By a Sister of Notre Dame. (Sands & Co. Ltd; 5s.)

This collection of good, varied stories should prove very useful to those who have to instruct children for the sacrament of Confirmation. Their value is increased because practical issues are not far in the background; and the making of good resolutions, etc., is made to seem nothing but normal. No doubt it is as a result of practical experience that the authoress gives most of her attention to the gift of fortitude, referring to the other gifts (with the exception of the gift of wisdom in the story about Saint Stephen) only by implication.

E.B.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD and SELECTIONS FROM THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST FRANCIS. Edited by Hugh Martin, C.H., D.D. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

The S.C.M. Press has given us a well-printed edition of these two well-known works: an anonymous translation of Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, and selections from Roger Huddleston's translation of the *Fioretti*. Brother Lawrence was a seventeenth-century