

restrained criticism. Miss Polimeni makes a great effort to be absolutely objective: but her presentation is definitely colored by her general thesis that Leon Bloy is a man of true sanctity and one who has an imperative message for modern society.

Miss Polimeni does not neglect such strange aspects of Bloy's career as his "orgies of piety" with Anne-Marie, his not uncommon rash judgments and his carelessly extravagant discussions of matters of the Faith. In most cases, however, she attempts to show that Bloy was aware of his faults and admitted them, without sufficiently indicating the most important fact of how he tried to correct his mistakes. We ask: Was he humble enough to publicly retract his false judgments? Did he ever try to repair the damage he did to Anne-Marie?

Bloy was convinced that he was a prophet; he consistently viewed himself as a man extraordinary, and seems to have used his self-imposed position as an excuse for his conduct. If Bloy was a prophet, it was of the variety of Old Testament figure called "voluntary prophet"; a man who appointed himself to stir up the religious fervor of the people by whatever extraordinary means that produced results. Though they often went to extremes, they were not condemned by God, and, at times, He actually used them for special missions. Undoubtedly, Miss Polimeni would claim no more for Leon Bloy. His prophetic qualities, according to the author, were: "'intuitive' intelligence coupled with spiritual sensitiveness and magnificent energy [alas] which compensated for the lack of reasoning power and sense of proportion that are noticeable in his writings." We wonder!

Bloy's inflexible rule of conduct was: "*Nolite conformari ad hunc saeculo*" The Latin, (Bloy's or Polimeni's) is a surprisingly appropriate figure of Bloy. There is something wrong. He was a man capable of extremes: a thing of beauty, rendered of dubious value because of a few glaring defects; a man more pathetic than he realized. As hard as she tries, Emmanuela Polimeni cannot help producing this judgment in her reader.

W.P.H.

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**The Face of the Heavenly Mother.** By Josef Cardinal Mindszenty. New York, Philosophical Library, 1951. pp. vii, 150. \$3.00.

The intention of Cardinal Mindszenty in writing this book was to deepen the impressions left by a previous volume which indicated the course of a mother's life from her first love to the grave. He dedicates this book "primarily to mothers and to young

women who hope to be mothers some day," in the hope that they "may look in this mirror and so grow up to their high calling." "This book, however, is not intended only for mothers, but for all who still reverence women in their heart."

The core of this book is the brief Mariology contained in the third chapter. The first chapters concern themselves with the notion of mother as found in the Bible. Chapter one, entitled "Mother as God sees Her," quotes from the various books of the Old Testament to prove the inherent dignity of mothers, and this not by merely human authority but by means of the inspired word of God Himself. This chapter is most impressive and makes explicit by God's word what nature has always commanded. Chapter two indicates the constant association which women had with Jesus and His ministry. Chapter three, the longest in the book, treats of the excellence of Mary, explaining just how Mary is said—and justly so—to be the Mother of God. Following upon this consideration, Cardinal Mindszenty mentions the consequences of this privilege. He cites the constant tradition in the Church as witnessed by the Evangelists, the Fathers of the Church, various Saints and Christian Art. There is a brief treatment of Mary's life as it paralleled the ministry of Jesus.

The remaining chapters of the book—six in all—treat of the relationship between Jesus and Mary: "Was Christ Hostile to Mary?" chapter four; "Mary as Mother of Humanity," chapter five; chapters six and seven indicate the profound influence which mothers have had on the course of time, and exemplify this with many incidents and stories. The eighth chapter is devoted to an account of the life of St. Monica. The ninth and final chapter of the book deals with the Church and how the notion of maternity is applicable to her. This chapter does not go into the usual apologetical questions raised at such a time; it rather supposes a general knowledge of the Church, and then applies the notion of motherhood to her.

The book, very smoothly translated from the original German, can be read with profit by all. Through it men could be led to adopt a more respectful attitude toward women and motherhood. Women can learn to appreciate the dignity and realize the obligations flowing from the dignity of motherhood. No one will leave it without having derived some benefit.

R.M.G.

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**The Heart of St. Therese.** By Abbe Andre Combes. Translated by a Carmelite Nun. New York, P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1951. pp. 191. \$2.75.

Among the Saints officially raised to the honors of the altar by Holy Mother the Church during the first half of this century, there seems to be none who surpassed the Little Flower in captivating the hearts of the faithful everywhere. In the United States especially, Therese Martin was adopted as "one of the family." Her formula for sanctity was contained in her simplicity and self-abnegation. Perhaps it was for this very reason that she appealed to American hearts. One of the proudest recollections of the children of Saint Dominic is that their Holy Patriarch never spoke but either to God or of God. So too, by her acts and words St. Therese showed her fellow mortals the correct approach to their Divine Saviour. Let us not try to step too far all at once, lest we overreach; it is better that we progress little by little, first taking upon ourselves the minutiae of life, before attempting the more heroic acts which characterize the lives of the Martyrs of the Church—was the import of her message.

This excellent work from the gifted pen of Abbé Combes will be of great aid to all who seek to imitate Therese in travelling along the road to perfection. It is not an easy task to write the life of a saint; and when a writer undertakes a spiritual analysis of a saint who prided in relating that her secret of success lay in doing the ordinary things of life and not the extraordinary, then he really has a problem on his hands. But Abbé Combes, a foremost diagnostician of Christian spirituality, accomplishes his task with ease. He lays bare, under a skillful scalpel, the workings of God's grace in the soul of His little one.

Some might be disappointed when they read this book. To them the Little Flower has been portrayed as a plaster and paint doll. They do not realize that she too had to face the realities of life, and struggle for her eternal reward. She shows man the way to God, but she does not belittle the very real trials which we mortals must undergo to reach the height of blessedness.

"Some people like to say that Therese brought sanctity within the reach of every soul. But she certainly did not claim that sanctification did not involve a dizzy climb, or that henceforth, those souls, whose model and teacher she was to be, could achieve sanctity without being obliged to rise as high as the invisible summits of the mountains. If anyone really thought she