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modern exhibition-piece be found than the Abbé commentary on the Book of Ruth: even though its biblical foundations were not considered to be valid, it would still be found to be a most noble treatise on the meaning of the Religious Life.

But it needs to be said that Claudel's treatment of his subject contains a great deal that is defective or erroneous. For one thing he badly confuses the Mystical and the Literal senses. He makes them overlap and treats as a Mystical sense what is only Literal-figurative (Literal-symbolic, for example). Yet this mistake is in part a happy one: it has lead him to cover in his treatment the whole figurative and poetical character of the Scriptures, a subject which he handles magnificently. But his depreciative treatment of the Literal sense—partly explained by his mistake as to its nature—is entirely deplorable. His outlook is that of an extreme Alexandrian biblicist. At least it *seems* to be his conviction that the mystical sense is all-present in the bible, lurking behind every Literal meaning; and certainly he represents it, not as a gracious but strictly dispensable overtone of biblical meaning, but as a sort of rival sense that is irked to find itself so prosaically accompanied, and sometimes he will allow it to oust the literal sense entirely. That is to say, there are passages where he considers that a Literal sense is wanting and the Mystical sense is its substitute. For example, having asked what divine significance is now to be found in the Levitical listing of pure and impure animals, setting over of the cud-shewers, and having decided that there is none, he concludes that the only sense to be attributed to the passage as a strictly biblical sense is a mystical one according to which some allegory or other touching the four evangelists is to be found. Claudel could have done very well, in fact, with a few lessons from those Literalist exponents of the Scriptures whom he denounces so bitterly, so brilliantly—in part at least, so justifiably. They might have taught him something of the Antiochian art of a historical approach to the bible.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

## HISTORY

GIOVANNI DI MONTENERO O.P.: DIFENSORE DEI MENDICANTI, by G. Meersseman, O.P. Istituto Storico Domenicano. S. Sabina, Rome. (n.p.)

Since the rise of the mendicant Orders of friars in the thirteenth century, the Holy See has shown them constant and consistent trust, and has continually regarded attacks on them as attacks on herself, and nowhere has she found greater defenders of her prerogatives than in their ranks. This was proved very early in the first century of their foundation, when, annoyed by the

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favour and trust shown to the friars by the popes, certain professors of Paris, led by William de St. Amour, made a great attack on both the Dominicans and Franciscans. It was on this occasion that such weighty men as St. Albert and St. Thomas entered the lists.

The same flame of opposition burst out in the middle of the fourteenth century, fanned by the mischievous Richard FitzRalph, Archbishop of Armagh, an attack which was frustrated by the Holy See. Almost a century later another Irish churchman, Philip Norreys, a canon of Dublin, issued a formidable indictment of the mendicant Orders, in which his bitterness was only equalled by the absurdity and violence of his charges. He stated as his preliminary charge that "as the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed by four divers princes, so the Church of God will be destroyed by the four Orders of mendicants." From such nonsense he went on to still greater absurdities, but nevertheless found, as such men always do, friends and abettors. These extravagances were condemned by Eugenius IV in 1440, so Norreys went to Basle, where the schismatical council was still sitting, but even there had scant success. Some six years previously (1434), before the Council of Basle had broken away from Papal authority, an audacious attempt had been made to foist on the assembled fathers a forged bull condemning the privileges of friars; and it was undoubtedly an attempt to punish the mendicants, and the Dominicans in particular, for their championship of the papal rights. Now the chief defenders of the Papacy at Basle were the great Torquemada and his henchman, John di Montenero (in Latin, *Montenegro*), and the latter took up the cudgels on behalf of his fellow mendicants. This treatise, hitherto unpublished, has now been edited and printed in full by Father Meersseman, who already has to his credit so many useful works of a similar nature. He has prefaced it with a brilliant preliminary dissertation, giving the complete history of the dispute, both at Basle when the council was a legitimate one, in the days of Montenero's defence, and afterwards in the days of the rather ridiculous Norreys, days subsequent to the treatise of Montenero here given. Norreys was finally condemned by Nicholas V in 1458, but Meersseman seems to be in error in stating he was actually deprived and imprisoned, as the bull ordered. Influence, chiefly that of the piqued university of Oxford, appears to have saved him. The university, as in the initial stages of Wycliffe's revolt against authority, seems to have been more solicitous for the conservation of her privileges—threatened by the punishment of Norreys, one of her professors—than for the preservation of sound doctrine. Norreys, however, remained a discredited figure.

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Enough has been said of Montenero's personal history and his work for the Church in the essay *Dominicans at Florence* which appears in this present issue of *BLACKFRIARS*. A word or two only need be said of his treatise. It is based on the writings of all the approved canonists and theologians, Gratian, Humbert de Romans, John Andreas, St. Thomas Aquinas, Ostiensis, Peter de la Palude, St. Albert the Great, Bl. Innocent V (Peter of Tarentaise) and a multitude of others. He takes the six articles alleged against the privileges of the mendicants and shows that each article, although gathered from canon law, has been so twisted and exaggerated by the adversaries of the friars, that it is patently false. For example, he shows how absurd is the teaching that the faithful are bound to confess yearly to their *parish priest*, because the fourth General Council of the Lateran used the word *proprius sacerdos*. Quoting St. Thomas and Andreas, he tells the Basilian Fathers that "whosoever confesses to his bishop, or to one appointed by him, confesses *proprio sacerdoti*." Also the Pope is the *proprius sacerdos* of every Christian, and if he grants faculties to mendicant friars then they, too, are *proprii sacerdotes*. The great historians of the writers of the Dominican Order, Fathers Quétif and Echard, knew of this work of Montenero, but only vaguely and indirectly. Other historians, even the great conciliar compilers, Labbe and Mansi, are silent about it, as also is Raynaldus, and the modern Hefele. Yet the episode was an important one in the history of the Church in the fifteenth century, so that we are doubly in Father Meersseman's debt, namely for his history of the dispute and the actual treatise.

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

PRINCE OF PASTORS—THE LIFE OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO. By Margaret Yeo. (Longmans; 7s. 6d.)

It is long since we had in English a good account of St. Charles Borromeo, hence the present compilation will be welcome and useful. For it gives us all the salient features and facts of the career of the great model-Bishop and statesman of the Counter-Reformation, and sets forth fully the surpassing holiness of his personality. All the same we cannot regard it as an ideal biography, and the figure of St. Charles which it portrays will not win every one's sympathy. That perhaps is because he is not in these pages made sufficiently *human*. The man has never yet lived who is wholly without flaw in his character, or without some un wisdom in his public and social action. And here there is only incessant panegyric, which after a while grows wearisome. It is all light and no shade—yet in St. Charles there are some things which for modern readers require to be treated apologeti-