

radiant, full of desire and at peace. For us the way of the cross is a dolorous way, but not to him; he went radiantly, and in joy. To us the Passion is a story of sorrow, to him of joy. What lover is sorrowful in suffering for his beloved? He seeks out hard things, and does them not grimly but with radiance and with peace.

In sorrow, yet always rejoicing; having nothing, yet possessing all things; working always, yet with heart always at peace. It is the spirit too of the Mother whose birthday we keep today. In her daily toil alone with the child and with the father, her heart pierced with a spear, sevenfold, a heart steeped in loneliness. Alone when she followed her son on the outskirts of the crowd. He was anybody's but hers. Alone when he was gone and she was left on earth, lonely working without him, desolate, yet radiant with joy in her heart, working while there was light.

And it is the same in that great spirit who still breathes over this house, who found in the hunting-field a symbolism that explained to her the difficulties and hardships of the life. Surely it was to her as a great gallop over wide spaces, stern and perilous but full of the joy of peril.

Darkness cometh when no man can work; beware lest it overcome you. The critic and cynic are at the door, they damp the ardour of life, smother the ideals of life. No religious, no true religious can be a critic or a cynic; we must be unrelenting, hastening ready to work before it is dark, living a life of enthusiasm and labour. For the night cometh.

Ah, the night cometh! Watchman, what of the night? Beyond the night is the day, beyond the day shall break the shadows; all these shadows shall flee away.



AN OUTSIDER LOOKS AT A GREAT DOMINICAN

VINCENT READE, Cong. Orat.

FOR many years, and indeed almost till the end of his life, Bede Jarrett was to me a remote though beneficent figure; important and attractive but in the background. I never heard him preach; I had never read even one of his books; I met him personally but once and then had not the

opportunity of conversing with him. I was, however, deeply interested in the striking expansion of the Dominican Order in England, both on account of men whom I knew among its younger generation, and because I saw the valuable impression that the O.P.s were making on English Catholic life and thought. As one, moreover, who though not an Oxford man was constantly in and out of that city and university, I was delighted with the comely establishment in St Giles, where—apart from its influence as a centre of learning and study—its daily Sung Mass and Office were and are something ever to be grateful for, cheering and uplifting the whole religious life of that unparalleled religious centre—liable however, as like all university centres it is, to become too exclusively theoretical and academic. Now in my own mind—and I suppose rightly—the expansion and consolidation of the English Province of the Order of Preachers was largely the work of Fr Bede, and I knew of his constantly repeated (Rome-dispensed) re-election as Provincial, which obviously told a tale.

Gradually, moreover (I speak for myself only), things began to trickle through concerning Fr Bede which tended to show unusual judgment and unconventionality of outlook, though both of these on the lines of the sane and practicable in things spiritual, without surrender—if I may so say—of the christianly heroic, and backed by a personal spiritual life which reached the heights. Then (after a long interval, of course) came the extracts and reprints of Fr Bede's words in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, which both confirmed my rather vague impressions and excited my enthusiasm; and now, with the biography of Frs Kenneth Wykeham-George and Gervase Mathew, the picture is completed and we see before us a uniquely valuable religious teacher and leader, claiming a significance far beyond the limits of his own Order.

Writing in a personal way, and not without trepidation at finding myself on such holy ground, I cannot refrain from indicating briefly what seems to me of especial value and importance in Fr Bede Jarrett's spiritual teaching and trend. And I venture to do this because what I am going to say, though fully contained in his writings and sayings, is

not always said explicitly—perhaps partly by reason of his persistent unobtrusiveness: that delightful and admirable quality so evident in Fr Bede and not always quite evident (if I may dare to say so) in spiritual writers. Over and over again, it seems to me, he quietly and kindly puts in its place flamboyance and unreality in respect of things spiritual, and indicates (not perhaps without a touch of humour) to us what we ourselves are likely to be able to achieve, or at any rate where we had better begin. A good deal of spiritual writing—not always uselessly—makes us say: ‘How wonderful; how splendid!’ and then, on reading Fr Bede, we say: ‘Why, here is something which will help me to pray and live rightly this very day—and tomorrow—and the next day’. And yet we are not by any of his words deprived of high spiritual aspiration and ambition; only shown where we are at the moment and what must be our next few steps. Permanently, however, we are warned off spiritual attitudinising of every sort and kind: as to that I feel certain.

I have alluded to my one brief personal contact with Fr Bede, and I did not then realise how even in those few moments he revealed himself. But I noticed the elevated calm of his manner and I heard him express sympathy with a strike which was then in progress—in a company, I fancy, which was either indifferent to the same or unsympathetic. I see him now as a man who habitually was little influenced by common opinion because he lived permanently in a higher atmosphere than the ordinary; and a man also who formed an independent and unconventional judgment on all matters—with a wonderful capacity for being right; and this in the spiritual as well as in the terrestrial realm. Never was his judgment, I should think, either derivative or popularity-seeking; yet also, never captious or originality-seeking. And that atmosphere of his own in which he perseveringly lived was assuredly the atmosphere of spiritual elevation. (I wish I had not used so many awkward phrases in attempting to describe a character so eminently simple.)

Being therefore thus painfully conscious of having in these random paragraphs used many clumsy phrases in speaking of one whose character was (as I feel) so pre-eminently uncomplicated, though certainly very rich, it is a

relief to me to be able now to point to a few passages in the biography which is now before us, and to two or three brief reprints of Fr Bede's written or spoken words, which will make abundantly plain what here I have said obscurely and roundaboutly. If I were asked by anyone to tell him what sort of a man the great Dominican was, in himself and in his thought, I should feel inclined to say: 'Read Sir Ernest Barker's tribute in *The Times* and Mr Coulton's letter (pp. 154 and 27 of the biography), then read Fr Bede's two sermons—at an ordination to the priesthood (p. 16) and the other on Good Friday which also, to my mind, might be described as a poem—and a very good one (biography p. 151). Read the account of his dealing with a subject whom he wanted to send to Grenada (biography p. 44). And then read what appears under Fr Bede's name in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, April 1951 and June 1951 (*The Sinner*, and *Prayer*). Here you will find all that I have tried to say, and much more—e.g., the exquisite tenderness, tact and even humility of a truly exceptional man and religious superior; and a teacher who enters into our hearts.

I have described this little dissertation as the view of an outsider because I desired to emphasise my deep consciousness that what I say must appear woefully inadequate (if not beside the mark) to members of Fr Bede's Order, and because I scarcely knew this great Dominican personally. But also I do not for a moment forget that any one man's view of a rich personality must be conditioned and limited by what the viewer himself is. I have said what I could, and what I much wished to say. But before leaving my subject I cannot refrain from running the risk of raising a wider and more speculative question, even if here I shall be found notably out of my depth. Yet it is suggested to me—and has long been suggested to me—by Fr Bede Jarrett's own words and writings, following upon another something that has appeared in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*:

In numbers 52 and 55 of this review there appeared two articles bearing the striking name of *The Divorce of Mysticism from Theology*, by Fr F. Vandenbroucke, o.s.b. Into the gist of these I will not here enter, but they dealt with an

important evolution in mystical teaching which took place between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Now what I venture to suggest here is that in our own age another revolution may be taking place, with Fr Bede Jarrett as one of its leaders. I should call it (for want of a better title) 'The de-regimentation or de-schematisation of Mental Prayer'. It is true that we can trace this movement back pretty far—to St Philip Neri, perhaps, through St Vincent de Paul and others unknown to my amateurishness (I should feel inclined to include St Paul of the Cross)—but it has not in standard books been given its proper place (if I may speak so boldly); partly perhaps because schemes lend themselves so much better to teaching and writing, and partly because the sublime writings of certain saints have been made to cover too much ground. Here I am helped by an authoritative teacher of the seventeenth century, the Carthusian Dom Innocent le Masson, who says, among many other wise things, 'Holy people have expressed their own particular experiences, which are not general rules', and before returning to Fr Bede I would mention how interesting and suggestive also I found something recently written by another Benedictine in one of our religious periodicals to the effect that many religious might well go back rather literally to St Benedict himself who in his Rule seems to place the essence of contemplative prayer in prayerful singing and recitation of the Divine Office followed (according to taste and attraction) by short periods of private meditation. But what I have in mind as to Fr Bede Jarrett himself is his gentle but very firm insistence on each person's prayer being entirely his own and beginning from any such real approach to God as he can achieve, and—I think he would have added, not introspective. The great mystics in the past did write from experience, but as we do not live in the fourteenth or sixteenth century, and as we are not Flemings or Spaniards, these experiences (to follow Dom le Masson) should not be made into rules. I have always thought that the poet Coventry Patmore spoke truly when he said that the saints show on a vast scale what all of us ought to be and do after our own measure; but even this, surely, must be on the broad lines. Here again, as above, I would beg my

readers to forget what I myself splutter out and turn to the *ipsissima verba* of our great Dominican, with his insistence that whatever else may be said, no one's prayer is right unless it is his own approach to his heavenly Father; not planned according to anything that has been read in books, or conceived in the terms of any set scheme of anticipated experiences or results. This wise and safe guide places our feet upon the rock. And all the time, surely, he is directly or indirectly telling us not to be introspective, but to have our eyes fixed solely upon God and to go step by step as God leads us.

An 'outsider', it would seem, should not attempt to go further and say more, but the outsider who has penned these lines is convinced that in Fr Bede Jarrett he catches the lineaments of a notably significant spiritual teacher and personage—outstanding (to say the least) in a calm and elevation of mind which made him courageously indifferent to the opinions of men; detached from the world though full of human sympathy and feeling; and in spite of his unobtrusiveness, prophetic in his ascetical doctrine; unexplicitly but indubitably a pioneer.

"THAT THE CHURCH MAY SPREAD AND INCREASE: this is the intention for which we must offer our prayers and our labours", says Pope Pius XII in his encyclical on the Mystical Body.

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