

current expressions—is 'fed-up' and 'browned-off'. The final chapter, entitled 'Contemplations', stresses that the so-called 'Contemplative Life' is not reserved to enclosed monks and nuns, and that unless lay apostles realise this fact, their work for souls will be almost useless.

THE PICTORIAL STORY OF WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL (Burns Oates; n.p.) is a pleasantly produced brochure with many striking photographs intended primarily as a guide to visitors. But the letter-press by the Administrator, the Very Rev. Mgr Gordon Wheeler, as well as the illustrations are instructive for anyone interested in the recent development of Catholicism in England. We miss, however, any clear picture of Eric Gill's Stations, the romanesque character of which seem to fit so admirably into the total structure; and many would like to see a criticism of the final plans, the marble and mosaic *versus* the beauty of the unfinished brick. His Eminence Cardinal Griffin contributes the Foreword, pointing authoritatively to the main function of the building—'a powerhouse of prayer where the Divine Liturgy is celebrated with true devotion in all its rightful splendour'.

## EXTRACTS

IN CROSS AND CROWN (Chicago) for September Father Bandera, editor of the Spanish *Vida Sobrenatural*, suggests that one of the dangers of modern piety is 'naturalistic spirituality'. It is based, he says, on a reversal of the order of grace and nature.

One readily recognizes that it is entirely necessary and proper for man to exercise every capacity of human nature in the practice of virtue. Human nature has found its most redoubtable champion in the Catholic doctrine that grace does not destroy nature but rather heals and perfects it. Naturalism proposes a revision of that principle. It is now suggested that human nature does not serve grace but, on the contrary, grace should be at the service of human nature. It is nature which is the queen and mistress of the Christian highway. His phraseology (or is it the translator's?) is not clear; but the point he makes is important since often in our desire to rescue human nature from destruction by the puritan or manichee we are inclined to forget its mortal wounds inflicted by original sin. The pendulum of doctrine will forever swing. But the remarks of Father Bandera serve as a defence to the attack on religious life on the plea that marriage is more in accord with nature. The Pope, here quoted with effect, has several times pointed to the danger of the modern attack on religious life from this angle. Naturalism, however, might also appear in the over-emphasis of

certain aspects of liturgical prayer, and in some of the other movements which are doing great things in the Church today. It is a question of balance, for the moral virtues are in question and they have to follow the golden mean.

*Evangeliser* (Brussels) for September-October contains a short communication on the 'Piano and the Altar'.

Those who have attended recital by a true musician—a great pianist for example—will have been impressed by the moments preceding the playing of the work . . . I mean that recollection into which the musician sinks, once he is seated on his stool, his eyes fixed on the piano. A physical recollection in which all the energies of his body are marshalled and disciplined, in which his attention is concentrated, in which his soul is set in tune. The musician, one might say, enters a sort of state of musical grace. Nothing exists for him except this work which he is about to make live again.

And this recollection is communicated to the audience. The last claps have died away; the crowd also is set in tune. In advance, caught by the contagion, they share in this approach as to something sacred.

This picture strikes us forcibly, often cruelly, when we watch some priests ascend the altar. This time it is the most authentic 'Sacred' with which we are concerned. It is the Mystery that is about to be accomplished, the meeting of God and his people through the ministry of the priest. Now we are no longer dealing with the interpretation of a great master to the audience, but the other Christ, in the midst of the Christian community, through whose instrumentality Christ living and glorious is about to renew the eternal Pasch. If there ever was a moment that commanded recollection of every action of every thought it is there. And if there ever was a moment when recollection should be contagious, it is this. Is this always so?

The priest who chats in the sacristy with his confreres or with the sacristan until the moment when the clock strikes the hour for mass, then goes to the altar snapping his fingers to call a wayward acolyte to order, drops his biretta on the altar step, clambers up to the altar, flicks open the missal and gets fussed over an undiscoverable commemoration . . ., is such a priest 'in tune'? Is he set in a 'state of mystery'? . . .

The comparison is a striking one, and should make both priest and congregation examine their consciences.

THE COMMONWEAL (New York, weekly) for September 16, provides first hand evidence of devotion among the Poles behind the iron curtain. Mr Kumlien visited Czestochowa for a feast day.

On the bastions primitive confessionals were erected in rows, with a short distance between each, to take care of the tired pilgrims upon their arrival, for this was no room in the churches and chapels. Some of the priests had to hear confessions three or four hours or more without interruption, and such were the crowds that confessions continued throughout the night. . . . In the chapels communions were distributed by the tens of thousands. In some chapels pilgrims could be seen outstretched in the form of a cross on the cold marble floor, their faces downwards, according to an old Polish practice, in order to fulfil a vow. As the dusk was falling a procession was formed on the bastions, several miles long and led by the clergy and several bishops. . . . In the gathering night a crowd was assembling round the shrine, everyone with a burning candle in his hand, a crowd so enormous that it finally looked like a sea of flickering lights . . . more than two hundred thousand people had gathered.

It is hard for Catholics in the West to imagine what this atmosphere is like; it most reminds one of a frightened child clinging to its mother. It is a passionate tribute to the past, to what appears as firm and lasting, a tribute which more and more becomes a single flaming protest against the present.

A Pole who was assisting at the ceremony beside Mr Kumlien assured him that their faith and spirit is greater than ever before, and that with these they have won the battle.

SURSUM CORDA is a monthly periodical, published in Australia (editorial 45 Victoria Street, Waverley, N.S.W.) by the Franciscan fathers, for Priests and Religious; and *Aliis Tradere* is a Spanish spiritual review recently started for Dominican Tertiaries (Bogota). These are signs of the times—spiritual reviews seem to be springing up like bulbs in spring, and this must mean that an increasing number of people all over the world are becoming interested in deepening their faith, their prayer and their Christian life.

SUPPLEMENT of *La Vie Spirituelle* (No. 34, 15 September) deals with spiritual direction once more, specialising this time in direction of married people. This is an important development as too many works on spiritual direction seem to visualise the religious or at least the single layman or laywoman as the subjects of direction.