

## NOTICES

FR NEIL KEVIN, realising how the familiar words of the gospels tend to get in the way of our accepting them as a real account of things seen and heard, has reconstructed twenty gospel scenes in *OUT OF NAZARETH* (Clonmore and Reynolds; 9s. 6d.). He does make the scenes live; yet nothing could be more living, more moving, more full of the creative art of the poet than the gospels themselves and it is a pity that we are forced to such expedients as this.

ST BERNARD commented on the *Qui Habitat*, Psalm 90, during one Lent towards the end of his life (1153). He gave fourteen sermons to his brethren, and it was a happy idea of 'A Religious of C.S.M.V.' to translate these as *LENT WITH SAINT BERNARD* (Mowbray; 3s. 6d.). The translation is not so felicitous as the former volume on the Song of Songs, and the translator has made a selection of only fourteen passages. Nevertheless there are some lovely things about faith, hope, and truth, worthy of the great preacher.

ONE METHOD for continuing the results of the annual retreat is called 'A Monthly Spiritual Renewal'. Fr Franz Lakner, S.J., has produced *A HANDBOOK OF MONTHLY RECOLLECTION* (Mercier; 7s. 6d.) to assist those who would do this seriously; it is perhaps as well that his final chapter is on the unification and simplification of the spiritual life, since all these methods are so liable to lead to complexity.

FR H. E. G. ROPE has rewritten the history of the English College in Rome in a handy volume of 112 pages with several illustrations. The College began in the eighth century with the Schola Saxonum as a centre for the English pilgrims in Rome. But when England broke with Rome it became of far greater importance as a College of Martyrs. Certainly every English Catholic should have a veneration for the *Venerabile*. *THE SCHOLA SAXONUM, THE HOSPICE, AND THE ENGLISH COLLEGE IN ROME* (2s. 6d. from the College, or English booksellers).

*RETURN TO THE FOUNTAIN HEAD* contains the addresses of Cardinal Gerlier and others on the occasion of the Tercentenary celebrations of the Sister of St Joseph, Le Puy, France. It is to be had from the house of the Congregation at St Louis, Missouri (\$3.00).

## EXTRACTS

THE HOLY FATHER'S recent mitigations in the rule of the Eucharistic fast are of the utmost importance for the Christian life. Much will have been written about the new rule elsewhere. Here we would only point to the general trend of the Constitution *Christus Dominus* which intro-

duced them. It is clear that the main purpose of the new ruling was to facilitate Holy Communion in a way that should protect the Blessed Sacrament from the over-insistence on the awe and worship of the Real Presence. Awe and worship are certainly due to our Lord present under the species of bread and wine. But throughout the history of the Eucharist this awe has so often led people to neglect Communion in favour of worship that adoration tended to hold people aloof from the lifegiving food. Now the Holy Father insists that he is making these alterations in the law of fasting in order that piety towards the Eucharist should increase, and at the same time those who are in special need of the support of this spiritual food, such as the sick, the aged, the hard-worked, should more easily approach the table of the Lord. True piety leads to an increased love even more than to an increased awe.

THE OFFICIALLY ORGANISED HERMITS of the Church are the Carthusians, and to herald the establishment of the Order in America *Review for Religious* carries an article on them in its January issue. The author quotes from the words of Pius XI, ratifying their new constitution in 1924.

For if ever it was needful that there should be anchorites of that sort in the Church of God it is most specially expedient nowadays when we see so many Christians living without a thought of the things of the next world and utterly regardless of their eternal salvation. . . . It is besides easy to understand how they who assiduously fulfil the duty of prayer and penance contribute much more to the increase of the Church and the welfare of mankind than those who labour in tilling the Master's field; for unless the former drew down from heaven a shower of divine graces to water the field that is being tilled, the evangelical labourers would reap from their toil a more scanty crop.

THE COMMUNITY LIFE of the Church is however just as necessary, and the Carthusians are in fact organised as a social body. Otherwise their life would tend towards the individualism characteristic of the later middle ages. This point is excellently brought out in an article in *The Friends' Quarterly Review* (January) which claims 'The New Devotion' or 'The Brothers of the Common Life', and in particular Thomas à Kempis, as Quakers before Quakerism. The author of the article insists that these men remained within the Church, but goes on to suggest that they acted in a different order of spiritual reality since the Church seemed to have failed—they 'saw the powerlessness of the Church to lead men out of the gathering darkness'. Whatever the truth of this may be, it is certain that the Church as Christ-on-earth played little part in their spirituality. Fr Philip Hughes in his history of the Reformation has shown how this New Devotion served to dull the senses of the faithful to the effects of the break with Rome. It is not that the *Devotio Moderna* was false;

'they sought to affect a thorough restoration of vital godliness—an inward reformation in the hearts of men. Their hope and their absolute trust was in God.' It was only that it was not allowed to expand in union with the whole Church; it was the partial, spiritual life lived almost to the exclusion of the whole life of Christians. But of course it had its great possibilities if it were applied to 'the whole Christ'. That is why this article is of particular interest, for the author claims the same possibilities for the modern Quaker: 'Quakerism is not a substantive faith, but . . . a discipline within the Christian faith, as that faith is to be found in the life and teaching of Jesus in the Gospels.' Now, if this were so and the body of the Society of Friends were like the group of the 'Brotherhood of the Common Life', then they may indeed become the vehicle of a great reawakening within the Church as was Thomas à Kempis, whose work is second only to the Bible in the number of its printed editions. But all the time we must also stress that other part of the life of Christ on earth which was neglected by the brotherhood and which may perhaps be neglected by the present-day Quakers in their genuine spirituality.

CROSS AND CROWN (December 1952) has an important article by Robert Ostermann on 'The Sanctity of Human Love' which is one of the elements in the common life of the Church most often omitted from theological treatment.

We can see that it is possible for two people to meet, two mysteries confronting each other and awaiting some kind of revelation, and yet experience an incalculable anguish at the apparent impossibility of communication, of union; while all the time the flesh urges the efficacy of its contribution. This is the consequence if the order of knowing and loving in personal relationships is reversed. Our understanding is crippled by its impatience to ravish the promise of another's soul. To this dilemma love brings the key; *is* the key. Now tender and merciful, submissive before this personal approach which respects the unimaginable privileges of self-hood, the soul is charmed to unveil its mysteries, and in turn it extends its love; perhaps at first timidly, with inexperience and sweet alarms, but then with increasing confidence and trust until a generous joy dispels every hesitancy. It is as if the soul recognises the other present in entirety, not as an inquirer or out of curiosity but as it were in an appeal emerging from its total self-presentation . . . person speaks to person. . . .

In the same issue Fr Seimer, O.P., shows how the Liturgy should be the centre of prayer, and yet how so often in the liturgical movement it has tended to restrict personal prayer. The article should be read in conjunction with 'The Rosary and the Liturgy' by Sister M. Albert, O.P., in *Doctrine and Life* (Feb.-March), where the two are shown to be complementary instead of inimical to one another.