

the hand of the Holy Spirit', (p. 64) and several of my theologian friends and myself are still pondering why 'the definition of the Immaculate Conception was necessary to preserve the universality of Christ's redemption'. (p. 66).

It may be presumptuous, it is certainly a '*cri de cœur*'—Father Vann can put the truths of faith over in a homely, beautiful way: he can make faith sound exciting, enticing and he does it by meditating out loud, not by didactic teaching: by letting us see his thoughts not by explaining to us the thoughts of the Church. He is too thorough a Thomist for there to be any essential difference but there is a very great accidental difference of form. One's imagination boggles at the thought of what might be achieved by his genius of expression coupled with the genius of a Kirkland Bridge in getting a thing over. Father Vann ought to write for the more simple people—nothing but the very best is good enough for them. They are people whose humility would prevent them from reading a book whose contents page showed a plan divided into Background, Statement, Presuppositions, Applications and Appendices. They are simple people who would think that such a book demanded a power of sustained reasoning and concentrated thought that is beyond them, and they would leave the book aside. Now Father Vann could (I am not going back on myself—in this book he has not) take such people by the hand and lead them through the whole argument of this book and make them so want to read on by the twofold beauty of thought and expression that they would not realise that they were concentrating or even thinking—it would be such sheer enjoyment. They are the mass of the people, inside or outside the Church, and Father Vann could be their prophet, but instead he drives them from him with chapter-headings such as 'Thomist Ethics' and the 'World of Today', and by arguments for the existence of God which are too succinct for those who need to be convinced and too long for those who do not. Let him address himself to the lowly and the mighty will stand around cap in hand, but if he addresses himself, or even seems to address himself, to the mighty, the lowly, his people, will hurry away.

TERENCE TANNER.

WE DIE STANDING UP. By Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

When faith is displaced by disbelief, and later by unbelief, then morality gives way to immorality and later to amorality. When spiritual values yield to material values, when the Christian degenerates into the pagan, the mind as well as the will atrophies, and man tends to become a creature anæmic and insipid. Since he lives in a pagan atmosphere and environment, the Christian might well become infected. It is to attack and expose such infection that Dom Hubert

van Zeller, O.S.B., composes his essays. Unquestionably attack is the note of the essays. Apologia may mean defence, but sometimes attack is the best method of defence: nowadays when we must needs defend our Christian heritage against the infiltration of paganism, it is good to expose the unreality, or rather apparent reality that disguises the evil in our midst.

But even if the author explodes rather than exposes some of the specious theories whereby the near-Christian seeks to justify his apathy, the author is not just out to destroy. It may first be necessary to pull down the superstructure, dispose of the rubble and then build afresh, if we would build wisely and well. Thus in the matter of prayer, for example, a number of 'willies' are allayed, and encouragement is given to put forth fresh effort, even if it be no more than persevering effort. And who will belittle persevering effort? Everyone can derive help and hope from the essays on 'the Prayer of Stupidity' and 'the Prayer of Futility'.

Apart from the essays on prayer, we have others on the social life of the Christian—Friendship, Engagement, Work, Generosity, On Being Bogus—as well as essays on particular topics. In all there is evident display of acute and penetrating observation and insight into contemporary spiritual ills. These are diagnosed and prescribed for uncompromisingly, helpfully: and, be it specially noted, lucidly. The book does not soothe, the points made are too telling and probing, although it does not console the heavily laden. There is nothing enervating about the essays: they are all stimulating and bracing.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, O.P.

LE SAINT DU JOUR. By Abbé Henri Berthet. (Lethielleux; Paris: 260frs.).

Daily the Church offers her—and our—sacrifice of praise in honour of those of her children who, grown to the full stature of Christ, already share his glory in their Father's home. What do we know of these 'fellow-citizens' who will be our companions for eternity? Many are hardly names to us, few little more than that. These vignettes of a saint for each day, brief yet comprehensive and effectively catching the essential characteristics of each, will surely help many towards a sense of kinship with these glorified members of Christ's Body, making it easier for us, exiles still but strangers no longer, to have our conversation in heaven as St Paul exhorts us. And if they further lead even a few readers to realise that as these men, women and children were like to us in the weakness and sinfulness of fallen nature, so we, called to be saints and vitalised by the same grace of God, can become like to them in holiness, then the author's labours will not have been in vain.

S.M.A.