

IN *THE ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ARCHITECTURE* (S.C.M. Press, 21s.), J. G. Davies rightly claims to be the first to collect the many specialist studies of this early Christian art into one complete and well-illustrated volume. For students of the spirit of the Church such a book provides a great many avenues down which he should be encouraged to venture. This book shows how literally as well as symbolically the Church was built upon foundations that influenced permanently its subsequent building. It was built out of private *homes* (Mr Davies supports the theory that the *Basilica* derives from the houses where the early Christians first met for their Eucharists), or from the civil courts of law or at least according to the plan of such public buildings, from the *tombs* of martyrs, and occasionally upon the foundation of *pagan temples*. From these significant beginnings the building of the church developed according to the needs of the Eucharistic liturgy and of the congregation of participants. A careful study of this comprehensive book will therefore reveal many facets of the sacramental and worshipful life of the Christian which today he often overlooks.

### EXTRACTS

SECULAR INSTITUTES take the lion's share of the April-May issue of *Doctrine and Life* (Cork). The introductory paragraphs seem to make a wrong contrast between the religious state and the secular institute, including the strange remark that 'The Church, by reason of her mission, has always sought to sanctify man; at the beginning it limited itself to transforming his interior life'. This is surely not only unhistorical but suggests a misunderstanding of the religious life that is only too frequent in our day. But the number goes on to describe the foundation and work of three institutes, the 'Opus Dei', the Grail and the Little Sisters of Jesus who follow in the footsteps of Charles de Foucauld. The latter are described in the words of their foundress's 'testament'—an inspiring document intended to send these women literally into the desert among the Arabs.

Just as Jesus, when on earth, was all things to all men, so must you be—Arabs in the midst of Arabs—but above all, before all, human in the midst of your fellow men. Do not think that you must erect a barrier between yourselves and the lay world in order to exclude whatever might threaten your dignity as religious or your life of intimacy with God. Do not remain on the outskirts of human affairs. Take your part in the world as Jesus did. Enter into, and sanctify your milieu by the conformity of your life to it, by friendship, by love, by leading a life totally given over, as was that of Jesus, to the service of others, a life so mingled with other lives, so much at one with them, that you will be like the leaven which disappears into the dough and causes it to rise.

The foundress goes on, against this background, to show how their life is essentially contemplative; and to warn them that if they lose their contemplative spirit they cease to be a leaven. They are 'nomad contemplatives'. In a world that is in many ways so uprooted there could hardly be a more pertinent vocation than this.

DOROTHY DAY, who has been living this kind of vocation for years, gives a plain, matter-of-fact description of what it may mean in the *American Catholic Worker* for April:

The older I get the more I see that life is made up of many steps, and they are small affairs, not giant strides. They may loom large in our consciousness, they may look big; but they are but boulders on the way that we have overcome. I suddenly remembered last month that I had kissed a leper, not once but twice, consciously, and I cannot say I am much the better for it. My progress has been no swifter. Once it was on the steps of Precious Blood church early one morning. A woman with cancer of the face was begging (beggars are only allowed in slums) and when I gave her money (no sacrifice on my part but merely an alms which someone had given me) she tried to kiss my hand. The only thing I could do was kiss her dirty old face with the gaping hole in it where an eye and a nose had been. It sounds like something but it was not. One gets used to ugliness so quickly. . . . Another time I was putting out a drunken prostitute with a huge toothless rouged mouth. I had been remembering how St Thérèse said that when you had to say No, when you had to refuse anyone anything, you could at least do it so that they went away a bit happier. I had to deny her a bed, but when that woman asked me to kiss her, I did, and it was a loathsome thing, the way she did it. It was scarcely a human normal mark of affection. One suffers these things and forgets them. But the daily, hourly, minutely giving up of one's own will and possessions which means poverty, is a hard, hard thing, and I don't think it gets any easier. . . .

The gestures of life are of course important, but they are not the life itself; and it is always difficult to keep perspective. We like to fancy ourselves in our gestures and then we fall. But the perspective of the life of poverty is what we need to live as Christians.

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CORRIGENDUM: The price of SONGS OF ZARATHUSTRA reviewed in the May issue should have been 8s. 6d. We apologise too for the misprint in the name of the publishers, George Allen & Unwin.