

organizing process: 'All over the world, people are living the Gospel in ways that articulate their own lives and speak to the lives of those around them. But because the feedback and coordination functions of the system as a whole are so under-developed, these initiatives are either not reported on and evaluated, hence the local learning-gains fail to become part of the wealth of the whole organization; or, more wastefully, after the fact they are held to have departed in some way from the One True Path and therefore criticised or repressed'. The vivid ethnography of English Midland parochial life turns out to be pervaded by a deeply felt and highly articulate vision of what the Church needs to become.

**'A BROTHER KNOCKING AT THE DOOR': THE MALINES CONVERSATIONS 1921-1925** by Bernard Barlow OSM, *The Canterbury Press*, Norwich 1996, 267 pages, £25.

The archives in Rome were not accessible, indeed even backed by letters from the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton and Cardinal Edward Cassidy, the author was refused permission to consult the relevant papers held by the Secretariate of State. Apart from that, as Bishop Geoffrey Rowell says in the foreword, this 'painstaking and scholarly work provides us with the fullest account so far of the conversations'. Chapter 1 sketches the background in the 19th century: the Oxford Movement, the proposals for a 'Uniate' Church of England using the Sarum rite, the strongly Ultramontane attitude of the Roman Catholics in England, particularly because of the large Irish immigrant population. Chapter 2 rehearses the story of the condemnation of Anglican Orders in 1896 ('the growing influence of the young Anglo/Spanish cleric, Mgr Merry del Val, in advising the Pope on English affairs ... the opposition of Cardinal Vaughan of Westminster, in conjunction with the other conservatives in Rome ... forced through the one-sided commission of enquiry and the publication of its negative decision'). Cardinal Mercier, from whose pastoral letter of 1924 the title of the book comes, appears in chapter 3, agreeing to 'informal conversations' at his residence in Malines, requested by Abbé Fernand Portal and Lord Halifax. Chapters 4 to 8 give us a careful account of the four conversations between December 1921 and May 1925 and the preparation for a fifth, never held since Mercier died in January 1926 and Portal in June. The story is interwoven with the reaction, both public and private, with doubts on the Anglican side as well as increasing hostility on the Catholic side. In 1923 Vincent McNabb and Bede Jarrett, by far the best known Dominicans in England, were encouraging Lord Halifax, who considered them as possible participants; but McNabb was also corresponding with Halifax about the effects of Modernism on High Church Anglicans and Jarrett eventually advised Halifax to become a Roman Catholic. Though Mercier and Portal were favourable to including Jarrett, Halifax's suspicions prevailed. In retrospect, perhaps, it would have been wiser to include a

representative of English Catholics, if for no other reason than to scupper accusations that continental Catholics could never understand the 'English' or anyway the 'Anglican' mentality. In February 1924, alluding to himself as an 'old Irish Catholic', McNabb wrote to Portal asking him to get Mercier to intercede with the Dominican authorities in Rome to allow him to write something in *Blackfriars* favourable to Mercier's pastoral letter justifying the Conversations. But there is much more to this murky story, of which the complexities are very well traced and assessed in this book. In the end, the author concludes, since the influence of Mercier and Halifax, twenty years after their deaths, on the future Pope John XXIII is well attested, the Malines Conversations have an important part in the development of a more eirenic and ecumenical Catholic Church.

**ANGLICAN ORDERS: THE DOCUMENTS IN THE DEBATE** edited by Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold SJ, *Canterbury Press*, Norwich, 1997, 355 pages, £30.

In 1896 Pope Leo XIII declared Anglican priestly orders to be 'absolutely null and utterly void': a decision, even allowing for the bombast of Vatican language, which sounds pretty irreversible. The purpose of this collection of documents is, firstly, to show the limited context of the verdict and, secondly, by demonstrating the thoroughness, fairness and wide spectrum of opinion that characterized the debate, to dispel some of the anger still felt (sometimes, now, by English Catholics as well). The editors 'have not enjoyed access' to the archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: they dedicate the book to Fr Giuseppe Rambaldi SJ who spent many years tracking down several of the documents in various other archives. Besides *Apostolicae Curae* itself and *Saeptius Officio* (the response of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York), extracts from T.A. Lacey's diary, two letters by Abbé Fernand Portal (whose chance meeting with Lord Halifax in Madeira in 1889 started the whole thing), and one by T. B. Scannell (out of a quite lengthy series in *The Tablet*), the book contains the judgments of Mgr Pietro Gasparri, Abbé Louis Duchesne, the Jesuit theologian A.M. De Augustinis and the joint opinion of the English Catholic triad, Canon James Moyes, Dom Aidan Gasquet and the Franciscan David Fleming. It takes stamina and a level head to enter the debate. The English triad was most concerned to discredit the consecration of Matthew Parker as Queen Elizabeth's first Archbishop of Canterbury in 1559 on the grounds that there is no surviving record of the episcopal consecration of William Barlow, the chief consecrator. The questions of form, intention, etc., demand even closer attention than the conjectural history. The decision of Pius XII in 1947, that the essential act in the sacrament of Order is the imposition of the bishop's hands together with the prayer, thus sidelining the handing over of chalice and paten with bread and wine, may arguably