

Reviews

BEDE JARRETT ANTHOLOGY, edited by Jordan Aumann, O.P.; Aquin Press, 30s.

Fr Bede Jarrett took it for granted that every Dominican had to be either a preacher or writer, or both. He was both himself, in addition to his long years in office as a superior, and he appeared to make light of it. His life was geared to what he had set out to do, but he never lost the human touch, and he had a fresh way of looking at religion and life. And that, one always felt, was the secret of his success as a preacher and writer. It was a new, a homely technique that people liked and appreciated because they could understand it.

Although his business was words, and he had his own formula for writing and speaking, he made do as a rule with a rough plan and a few scribbled notes. He had a taste for good writing, but never enjoyed leisure enough in his own work for the precise diction of a Knox or Martindale. So that one grew accustomed to the familiar turn of phrase and the pattern of his sentences, which were always in complete character with what he was himself, direct and spontaneous. Man and message never failed to come through, even if the man, with his charming personality, was far more impressive than what he had to say or how he said it. For here was a new voice, a new pen, and the response to both was immediate.

Is it possible, then, to reflect and preserve the spirit of such a man in a copious selection from his works? Sooner or later, no doubt, an effort had to be made, and here is the *Bede Jarrett Anthology* to offer the reader, who may never have seen or heard him, 500 packed pages of his spiritual teaching, made up of long extracts from his books and published sermons. It is not an attractive volume at first glance. A pensive, youthful Friar Bede appears on the somewhat funereal jacket, and the pages behind him might very well be a necrology of his deceased brethren. A format more in harmony with the usually blithe spirit of the author might surely have been devised. As it is, one gets the impression of handling a clumsy, uninviting book. 'It looks like a mortuary card' was the comment of one who knew Fr Bede extremely well.

With so much and such a variety of material at his disposal, the initial problem that faced the editor must have been the best way to arrange it. The method he has chosen is hardly to be commended, because the reader will find it a tiresome business to look up what he happens to want. The editor appears to have confused the issue by trying to codify his material in some sort of logical order, and the division of the book into parts and then chapters is arbitrary and misleading. The result of this arrangement is that almost every chapter becomes a small treatise in itself: its general title is of little or no help in telling the reader what is to be found in it. Sub-titles in the Contents page could have supplied a

useful clue, and obviated the labour of a prolonged search.

An anthology is not intended to be an omnibus, it is a discriminating choice of passages typical of the author's style and talent, and the simplest method in this case would have been to present the subjects in alphabetical order, and to provide an index. The source of each extract could have been indicated, either in the index or where it appeared in the text, and it would then have been an easy matter for the reader to look up what he wanted to know. 'What did Father Bede say about Music, Private Property, Friendship, Sin?' And there it would have been, with chapter and verse, available at once. It is possible to visualise the *Anthology* in this form, with every page pleasantly laid out, and easy on the eye. But this book has no index, an astonishing omission in a compilation of this kind, and the appendix offers no help in tracking down what the reader may be after.

Not everything he wrote or preached was vintage Jarrett, and some of the long, and over-long, extracts could have been pruned to advantage, and left room for the inclusion of a still wider choice of material. Was it necessary to reproduce so much practically *in toto*, instead of a few paragraphs that give the gist of his thought? It was never his intention to produce a body of doctrine—the very thought of it would have horrified him—but he dealt happily enough, and after his own fashion, with most topics of human and general interest. His first and best book, *Meditations for Layfolk*, compiled from his note-books before he was thirty, is crammed with titles that never appeared before in such a spiritual work, and many of them, strangely enough, are not included here.

But it was a happy touch on the editor's part to round off the book with an epilogue, *Lourdes Interpreted by the Salve Regina*. Most of the sermons in this section were preached by Fr Bede on his last visit to New York in 1933. They were, in fact, his American swan-song, delivered in the church of our Lady of Lourdes, where he had preached so many Lenten courses as the guest of the late Mgr Joseph McMahan, and they have about them that haunting quality of style and phrasing and devotional drama which all who heard him will recognise for what it was—the authentic ring of his silvery voice. The sermons were originally printed for private circulation, and copies were presented to Father Bede's admirers only a month or so before his death in 1934.

EDWIN ESSEX, O.P.

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH, by Jean Daniélou, S.J.; The Faith Press, 2s.

In this most informative short study, Père Daniélou gathers all the important evidence for the ministry of women in the first four centuries. Though there is a certain disordered profusion in the presentation, there emerges an impression of the great variety of functions which women fulfilled, especially in the East, where, in the absence of a priest, a deaconess might even incense and sing the