

SHORT NOTICES

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY by Eberhard Bethge, *Fount Paperbacks*, 1995, Pp 138, £6.99.

Written by his closest friend, who escaped execution only because the Soviet army arrived in time, this fine biography first appeared in English (translated by Rosaleen Ockenden) in 1979 and is reissued to mark the 50th anniversary of Bonhoeffer's death on 9 April 1945. From March 1941 onwards he visited Switzerland, Norway and Sweden, as well as Rome, meeting among others Karl Barth, Visser 't Hooft and George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, vainly hoping to get Allied support for an internal German attack on Hitler. The attempt in April 1943 by Fabian von Schlabrendorff, to whose young cousin he had just become engaged, failed, and Bonhoeffer was among those arrested. He spent the remaining two years of his life in various prisons, including Buchenwald. Documents implicating him in a conspiracy against Hitler as far back as 1938 sealed his fate. While his faith and courage emerge with awe-inspiring clarity in this book, Bethge's closing chapter on his writings is somewhat defensive - 'very few professional theologians of any standing concern themselves with his ideas' - so much the worse for them, one might think, but, mainly through Bethge's own editorial work on the collected edition, Bonhoeffer's theology is increasingly studied and respected.

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL 1895-1995 by Peter Doyle, *Geoffrey Chapman*, Pp 162, £16.99.

By the head of the Department of Arts and Humanities at De Montfort University, Bedford, who has published a number of articles in academic journals about the English Catholic Church in the last hundred years, this is a fascinating history of Westminster Cathedral as well as a beautiful celebration of the centenary, with photographs and drawings from the archives. We learn, for example, that Eric Gill, only beginning to make a name for himself and only recently received into the Church, was surprised to be asked to do the Stations of the Cross. The Cathedral, he thought, was 'as disgraceful a piece of sham stylistic building as any Pugin Gothic', but he accepted the commission. The Stations, completed by 1918, aroused a great deal of scorn, from both art critics and ordinary Catholics, but gradually a more favourable view has prevailed. The story of his altarpiece, unfinished when he died in 1940, completed by Laurie Cribb, and installed after the war was over, created further controversy because the Cathedral authorities insisted on having St Thomas More's pet monkey hacked out. Some might wonder why a building that was to be the 'national flagship for English Catholicism' needed the side chapel dedicated to St Andrew and the Scottish Saints: its mosaic decoration

provoked more hostility - indeed the artist's biographer suggested that 'working in the heart of English Catholicism brought out the cold dourness in the Scottish Presbyterians'. Boris Anrep was asked to prepare designs for St Patrick's chapel in 1937 but Cardinal Hinsley decided that the estimate was too high. Due honour is paid to the Choir School and the splendid musical tradition. One interesting statistic is that the Sunday Mass attendance is twice what it was in 1970 - nearly four thousand.

MEDIAEVAL REACTIONS TO THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON by John F. Wippel, Milwaukee, *Marquette University Press*, 1995, Pp 113, \$10.00.

In the most recent volume in a distinguished series of annual lectures in honour of St Thomas Aquinas, Monsignor John F. Wippel contrasts the views on the relationship between faith and reason held by Aquinas (harmony), and by his arts faculty contemporaries Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia (some tension but not the double-truth theory often attributed to them). This careful study, while clarifying the medieval discussion, also invites reflection on the distinction between holding something on purely rational grounds and believing it on divine authority.

PROMISE FULFILLED: MEDITATIONS by Carlo Maria Martini, translated by Alan Neame, *St Pauls (UK)*, 1994, Pp. 175, £17.25.

In these very accessible studies of the four different and complementary accounts of the Passion, the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, well known as a biblical scholar, provides material for a do-it-yourself retreat during Lent or Easter.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI: WRITINGS FOR A GOSPEL LIFE by Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., *St Pauls*, 1994, Pp.240, £8.95.

The Crossroad Spiritual Legacy Series has already given us introductions to Benedict, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis de Sales and Teresa of Avila. Interspersed with substantial quotations, this presentation of Francis of Assisi's writings, by an authority on the original sources, shows how rooted they are in specific historical circumstances but how, like every classic, the ideas are as illuminating now as ever.

Reminiscences of Fr Henry St John OP are invited for a memoir which it is hoped will be published next year. Enquiries and contributions should be addressed to Mollie Lamb, The Henry St John Centre, St Anne's, Augusta Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 3AU.