

EDITORIAL

THIS issue of *THE LIFE* has been designed to acclaim the publication of the first biography of Father Bede Jarrett, O.P. It is not that this review is directly indebted to Fr Bede for its existence as is the parent review, *Blackfriars*; for he had already been dead ten years before the first hesitant pages of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* appeared. But Fr Bede should be considered as a grandparent of the review since he laid down the principles which inevitably developed into the publication of a magazine devoted to the true Christian life. Fr Vincent Reade shows this almost inevitably in the article below. And the biography itself is most noteworthy in its elaboration of the pattern according to which the outstanding English Dominican lived. Frs Kenneth Wykeham-George and Gervase Mathew have excelled themselves in this matter of the pattern of true life, enabling us to distinguish the two plans according to which he lived. Most men live from day to day without conscious or deliberate pattern in what happens to them. They are forced into a mould by surrounding circumstances; the job they do was presented to them as inevitable, the manner of their life is regulated by that job together with a whole series of external influences including the Government, the wireless, the standards of suburban or 'worker' culture. An outsider could perhaps look back on a man's life story and discern the pattern of providence, the way God had dealt with him by 'accidents' and world, as well as local, events. But the individual himself as a rule knows only the design of his weekly wage-packet and of the commandments to remain faithful to his spouse and to keep holy the Sabbath day.

A Christian man who lives his faith to the full is able to discern a twofold pattern in his existence with which he can willingly co-operate and in which he can fill in the details. Father Bede Jarrett was such a Christian. First there is the design of the Word, who is the 'figure of God's Substance', and in whom all things are made. A Christian man looks directly to that pattern by means of his contemplative understanding of God's working in his life. Fr Bede was always

quietly resigned to this design that God had for his well-being. The concluding chapter of the biography, 'No Abiding City', brings out his conscious acceptance of the design of providence. 'Why worry?' is a sentiment that can be jazzed up into the most sickly of hearty bathos; but as a refrain to his life Fr Bede made of it the most whole-hearted and positive resignation to God's creative and paternal will. Father Bede was so successful a father himself because he was seldom unconscious of the immediate presence of the heavenly Father. As Provincial or Prior he would take that personal interest in his subjects which changes the authority of the superior into the love of a parent. 'I hope, brother, that you are not cutting down your breakfast through any motives of piety', revealed the type of concern which led him to watch his 'subjects' at their food as well as at their work and prayer, not as an invigilator but as nourishing the Dominican life of his children. He learnt this from his wilful reliance upon the pattern of the Word of the Father.

But there is another pattern which requires a vigorously holy life to be able to fulfil it justly and successfully. This is the pattern of the man's own ideals. Not only did Father Bede look as it were backwards to the Father whence he had sprung, but he looked forward to the Father's Kingdom or household which was yet to be established. A man's own ideals as a general rule teem with selfish plans and ambitions and consequently clash continuously with the divine designs that mould his life. Initiative is so often individualism, a feathering of one's own nest. Only the initiative of the saint is purified of ambition and fitted into the movement of divine initiative. Above everything else the biography of Father Bede shows his initiative for the Order of Preachers to have been free from any ambition or individualism, and for that reason the book will remain a blueprint according to which the English Province of the Order of Preachers can continue to build its extensions.

Father Bede early developed his plans for his Order, the realisation of which would mean not only his own sanctification—they have already been sufficiently realised for that—but also the sanctification of the English Dominicans and

of those for whom they labour. He knew what he wanted in Oxford and in the British West Indies, in Persia and in South Africa; he knew what he wanted for the Dominican parish and the Dominican school; he knew what he wanted from the individual Dominican and from the Tertiary; he knew too what he wanted of a Dominican review. But in none of these plans was there the hard unpliability of the self-opinionated man; he knew that these very ideals themselves came originally from the same fatherly plan '*in Verbo*' so that they too must be moulded by circumstances and occasions and personalities under God's control. This was the secret of his leadership and of his success.

There could hardly be found a more 'all-round' model of 'The Life of the Spirit', the example of a Christian man whose life was made always more abundant by being imbued with the life of Christ. His plans and his pleasures, his friends and his follies—nothing was merely rejected, nothing was destroyed by selfishness or ambition, but all was purified and brought consciously and deliberately within the scope of the divine plan. What Father Bede Jarrett possessed was LIFE, and he possessed it in abundance.

NOTE. The book to which reference is made several times in this issue is *Father Bede Jarrett, O.P.*, by Kenneth Wykeham-George, O.P., and Gervase Mathew, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 12s. 6d.). It is to be followed by volumes of Correspondence and Sermons, etc., by Fr Jarrett himself; a sample of these volumes will be found in the three letters and two conferences that are published, by courtesy of their editors, in the present issue of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.



ERRATA: In the January issue (Vol. VII, No. 79):

p. 321, l. 33: For 'Brompton Oratory' read 'Birmingham Oratory'.

p. 323, l. 14: A whole line was unfortunately dropped, reversing the sense of the sentence. It should read: 'Fr Steuart triumphed over his sensitivity and sense of isolation through his characteristic and intense desire for the "whole Christ".'