

on the local landowners and authorities. Little by little he chipped away the wall of despair that has traditionally prevented people in Sicily from helping themselves. Over three or four years he brought the people new hope and confidence and above all a new ideal: the ideal of the Gospel as something not locked in a book, but lived and therefore understood.

There are two morals to this story, and both are in this book. The first can be read in the contribution by Dolci himself and by two fishermen of Trappetto who tell his story as they saw it. It is the story of Antigoni, of Cardijn in the slums of Brussels, of the English settlements and community associations, of community development in India or Africa. At the root of every really successful social change lies education, and of more than a purely intellectual kind. It must be education based on life, inspired by a high ideal and a true understanding of and respect for personality and community, resting on persuasion and not violence: education which, as Dolci says, puts the greatest things within reach of even the least among the people. Such education cannot be on a mass scale. It comes down, in the last resort, to one man and a little circle around him. And for that reason it can be started, as Dolci or Cardijn started it, by one man going among the people alone, with no kind of mandate or support: which is at once the easiest and the most difficult way of all.

But secondly, basic education and community development, like every other good thing, can be twisted into a heresy. Dolci has been very directly influenced by Gandhi, and has himself used, very successfully, the technique of the fast unto death. He has also had the misfortune to be interpreted by another contributor to this book, Professor Aldo Capitini of Cagliari. I suppose one cannot object to Capitini's calling Dolci's activities a total choral revolution, though it makes them sound like a younger brother to the revival of Gregorian chant. But one can certainly object, as Fr Journet does at the end of the book, to the pacifist, utopian, naive philosophy which Capitini unnecessarily claims to be implied in what Dolci has done. The other thoroughly objectionable character in this book, though in quite a different *genre*, is the self-satisfied French girl guide whose views on slumming in Partinico figure as Chapter I.

MICHAEL P. FOGARTY

FROM FASHIONS TO THE FATHERS. Hilda C. Graef. (Newman Press; \$4.00.)

It is difficult to understand what impels a person to put into print the story of his or her own life. Perhaps in our own days it is simply the prodding of publishers and the thought of the royalties held out as a

bait. But more deeply there must be some other motive; some vision which makes it possible for the publisher to produce an effect with his prods. No autobiography would be readable unless the author had first been able to see his life as some sort of whole, to be able to trace a pattern in the variegated scene which is stretched out day by day through years of experience and activity. Memory and self-regard are not sufficient of themselves; the author must be able to stand outside himself, to be able to regard his part with some objectivity. This is clear in all the great autobiographies and 'Confessions' of the world. The source of this vision perhaps differs in every case; but for the Christian there is at least one common source of this power. The Christian believes in the Providence of God, which is itself absolutely one, and which conceives each individual from birth to death as a unity. It is possible therefore for the Christian by his faith to be able to become sufficiently objective to see the unified pattern of Providence stretched out behind him.

Miss Graef in this autobiography gives the occasion of her book as a chance remark of her mother's; she gives also the purpose of writing it—to make a contribution 'to the large body of evidence that the Church does not fetter the minds of her children but rather stimulates their critical faculties and encourages independent research'. But the vision must surely have come from the faith, the genesis of which she describes. It is the story of a German Protestant girl, the daughter of a wonderfully patient mother with Jewish blood in her veins. Her religion was largely undermined by the rationalism of the Berlin of the first world war and after, but the Hitler revolution forced her, and eventually her mother, into England. There she found another home and nationality—and the Catholic faith. Miss Graef does not leave us there, but describes her subsequent experiences—her trial of the religious life, her launching into spiritual journalism, her contact with Therese Neumann, and so on.

But as in all such accounts the judgments passed are those of one person looking at the scene from one point of view. This means that sometimes at least the view is distorted and the judgment not quite accurate. The few facts which the reviewer is in a position to check reveal certain distortions. As, for example, in the account of the community of Tertiaries who live on Ditchling Common in Sussex. Miss Graef spent a few weeks among them and has some hard things to say about them. But of course, having no sympathy for the life the community has tried to live there for the past forty years, she would not be able to understand them or to judge their way of life accurately. There are one or two other points which disclose a very personal and limited judgment. This is, however, a natural weakness in most

autobiographies, and one which is not often adverted to by those who give way to the strange impulse to set before the world the experiences of their own past histories. The weakness, too, does not necessarily make a book of this nature less readable. Miss Graef's account of her life is certainly readable. C.P.

GOD'S TREE: ESSAYS ON DANTE AND OTHER MATTERS. By Kenelm Foster, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s. 6d.)

Of the fourteen essays reprinted here, five deal directly with Dante, others with Italian history and literature, two with French literature, and there is a speech for St Thomas's day on 'The Tact of Saint Thomas'. The author has brought them together because his 'implicit concern throughout has been to gain some insight into the reach, so to say, of the human soul'.

I can best place these essays by saying that they have the close argument and careful presentation of specialist studies yet are brief and light enough for the reader with no specialist knowledge. This is true even of the 'exploratory' papers on Dante, written primarily for people familiar with the argument of the *Divine Comedy*, but useful for introducing others to a way of reading the poem. Fr Kenelm's method of studying authors in relation to the contemporary theological interests enables him to form many original judgments which really deserve greater elaboration. He offers them with a certain delicacy and an unflinching courtesy. B.M.

GUILLAUME DE SAINT-THIERRY: LETTRE D'OR. Introduction, Traduction et Notes par J. M. Déchanet, O.S.B. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

A few years after the foundation of the Charterhouse of Mont-Dieu William of Saint-Thierry visited the community and later sent them his golden letter 'to encourage them in their holy profession'. He intended it mainly for novices and those recently professed. As becomes a friend who had shared their solitude, he wrote in a familiar and simple style.

Dom Déchanet has preserved this simple style in translation. He has limited himself in the present 'minor edition' to a translation with an introduction and notes. The 'major edition' will contain the Latin text and translation, a critical apparatus, illustrative notes and studies of historical and doctrinal problems. In the meantime he has given us just enough to see the letter in relation to William's other writings, and has added some bibliographical helps for further study. More important, he has provided an admirable translation of a treatise which, although occasional in inspiration, offers a spiritual doctrine of classic fullness and maturity. B.M.