

NOTHING IS QUITE ENOUGH. By Gary Mac Eoin. (Hodder and Stoughton; 12s. 6d.)

There is nobility as well as humility in this 'story of a soul'. The author describes in detail his daily life, as novice and student, as a member of a modern religious Congregation in Ireland, from his entrance at the age of eighteen until the eve of his ordination. He describes the régime and the principles which inspired it, writing with simple delicacy and quiet humour and very little—sometimes perhaps too little—criticism. Just before ordination he is told by his superior that he is not in fact to be ordained, ever, and that he is not to know the reason for this decision. He is then left to adjust himself to life in the world—and to the task of making a living in it.

This *dénouement* is described without bitterness; yet what an extraordinary state of affairs it implies! Two things stand out very clearly, if the author's account is to be believed. First, a religious Order may or may not be right in rejecting a subject, even without warning and at a very late date, but at least when it does so it should treat him as a human being, a rational animal: it should give some rational grounds for its decision. God deals with all things according to their natures: it is tragic when men, in the name of religion, seem to try to go one better than God.

Secondly, what is implied here is the assumption—to be met with, alas, in other contexts also—that if in every situation there is no *legal* contract, there is no *moral* responsibility either. Thus legalism drives out theology—and indeed religion. This is an issue, surely, of the most profound importance in the contemporary life of the Church; and it is well that it should be brought to our attention in a book as humble and as courageous as this.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

THE DEMON OF PROGRESS IN THE ARTS. By Wyndham Lewis. (Methuen; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Wyndham Lewis is writing about modern art. His own part in the movement as the originator of Vorticism and its journal *Blast*—ventures which he has since repudiated—not only adds zest to his vituperation, but makes him acutely sensitive to the dangers of its more extreme manifestations. For he envisages a point when art will become so 'advanced' that zero will have been reached; then, a canvas resplendent only in the virgin whiteness of its priming will be offered as the ultimate goal of pictorial expression. He cites the *Nouvelles Réalités* in Paris and the more ephemeral factures exhibited in Dover Street to support his argument. However, this is not a reactionary book, and there are enthusiastic words about several contemporary British artists, while also perceptively remarking that they, too, may at any

moment become the victims of this strange disease: extremism. Nor is the problem viewed historically, and therein perhaps lies the weakness of the essay.

For instance, he compares the multiplicity of styles current since the Impressionists with the homogeneity of other periods. But often that homogeneity seems relative when viewed closely. A Sienese quattrocentist would probably have found Masaccio's Carmine frescoes a little disquieting; Michelangelo and Titian provide two very different records of the High Renaissance; Caravaggio and Annibale Carracci were both practising in Rome at the same time. Similarly, although extremism may bring modern art to a ludicrous pass, nonetheless it has appeared in many guises before, from the flaccid perfection of late Greek art to the more unpalatable confections of the Italian Mannerists. It would seem to be a sign that the artist has nothing more to say, but it has never prevented subsequent artists from saying a great deal.

But these are minor blemishes in a stimulating and very good book. The debunking of the myth of the artist's freedom is long overdue and expressed with great lucidity. Every art student striving to be *avant-garde* and painting 1915 'Braques' should read and ponder his argument carefully. The discriminating layman will enjoy it, too; but fundamentally Mr Wyndham Lewis is a painter, and it is his fellow artists who will most fully appreciate the subtleties and be most provoked and enlivened.

MARIA SHIRLEY

STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND BELIEF. By Martin Jarrett-Kerr, C.R.
(Rockliff; 15s.)

Most criticism deviates in some degree from the work of art. The more valuable sort, through its function of elucidation, directs us back to the work with an increased capacity for appreciation; the rest concerns itself with problems connected with the work, but not immediately related to our appreciation of it. In these studies, which treat in their various aspects of the effect and importance of a writer's beliefs in relation to his work, and through the work in relation to the reader, Father Jarrett-Kerr is engaged in criticism of the second sort. There are two general essays, and others on the influence of popular beliefs on the development of the ballad, on the 'theological drama' of Calderon, on the unself-conscious faith of *I Promessi Sposi*, on Dostoevsky's agonized debate between belief and unbelief, and on the novels of C. F. Ramuz.

Father Jarrett-Kerr wisely recognizes that 'it is impossible to discuss univocally the relationship between belief and literature'. But such complex relationships can be discussed satisfactorily only when the various levels of interaction are clearly distinguished. The effect of the