

of the beatitudes, of the necessary fantastic in which the folly of the cross so often appears in practice. He insists on the practice. This Frenchman presses on, indeed, to the intelligibility of these paradoxes, bringing up a refreshingly unusual range of references, scriptural and other, but the effort is always pastoral: he travels light like the curate, because he is travelling far and high, to lead others and informed by compassion.

He would gather up, then, the fragments of the kingdom by the way: he would like, I think, the way Africans in Kenya greet the friendly passer-by, saying, 'Mirembe!' 'Peace!'

MARY JACKSON

*ATHLETE OF CHRIST.* By Marie McSwigan. (Newman Press, Maryland; \$3.25.)

Saint Nicholas of Flüe, the patron saint of Switzerland, lived from 1417 to 1487. Peasant, soldier, husband and father, he became famous also as a visionary, a peacemaker, and finally a hermit, living in solitude and prayer, and for nineteen years miraculously existing without either food or drink. In this book Marie McSwigan seeks to introduce St Nicholas to her fellow Americans who, she thinks, 'will claim him as a spiritual father and see in him a similarity to their own great leaders'. About three-fifths of this book tells of his life; how, till the age of fifty, he lived the simple life of a farmer in central Switzerland; how he then decided it was God's will that he should leave his wife and ten children for the life of a hermit, and wore down his reluctant wife until she gave the necessary consent; and how finally the stories of his piety and his visions brought so many pilgrims to his hermitage that the government had to institute a pass system to separate the genuinely devout from the curious. He is even credited with having helped to bring about the union of Fribourg and Solothurn to the other eight cantons in 1481, an event which marked the formation of the Swiss Confederacy. The remainder of the book describes his canonization in 1947, and the miraculous cures ascribed to his intervention.

This is an imaginatively-written and readable book, attractively illustrated with photographs of St Nicholas' native country and of various works of art depicting him. (The frontispiece is a particularly impressive wood-carving of the sixteenth century.) Those with an interest in out-of-the-way saints whose cult is rooted in centuries of legend and whose deeds are enshrined in a country's art and history will probably find it pleasant reading.

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