

PASTOR NIEMÖLLER. By Dietmar Schmidt. Translated by Lawrence Wilson. (Odhams Press; 21s.)

A biographer should certainly admire his hero, for sympathy enables him to enter into the very heart of his subject. Yet if he lacks detachment enthusiasm will make him blind to certain defects and deficiencies that are rarely absent from human life. Dietmar Schmidt certainly has plenty of admiration for his hero but does not seem to have used his critical faculties to anything like a sufficient extent. Although he mentions adverse comments made about Niemöller by friend and foe alike, he fails to see his inconsistency with regard to three important issues. The first is his apparent and self-confessed failing to appreciate fully the relevance of theology to human affairs, although he is shown to be constantly concerned with theological issues. The second is Niemöller's decision to apply in 1941 from the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen for recall to active service in Hitler's army. This decision is said to have been prompted in part by his desire to resume active opposition; yet such an opposition could not have been resumed without a number of false statements. Lastly, in his dealings with Russia Niemöller appears anxious to limit himself to purely religious matters but in dealing with other states he refuses to recognize any such narrow religious sphere. As a result of this double standard one gets the impression that he balances his non-interference on the soil of U.S.S.R. by over-interference elsewhere. Taken as a whole the book makes interesting reading if one overlooks the rather pronounced German nationalism behind some passages. It also makes for pleasant reading thanks to a smooth translation.

CESLAUS VELECKY, O.P.

GREAT CATHOLIC FESTIVALS. By James L. Monks. (Abelard Schuman; 12s. 6d.)

The lavish dress and simple popular language of this book could blind one to the erudition that has gone to making it. It traces with thoroughness the origin and development of the liturgy and popular customs surrounding the feasts of Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi and the Assumption. It is to be welcomed for the generosity of the illustrations and the learning.

G.A.M.

THE HIGHLANDS. By Calum I. Maclean. (Batsford; 25s.)

This is an astonishing book to come from a London publisher. Although Messrs Batsford have given us a number of very good books about Scotland, by such lively interpreters as George Blake and George Scott-Moncrieff, this has an unusual and permanent value as an