

NOTICES

COLLINS have recently started a new venture in introducing religious books in their cheap 'Fontana Books' series. With J. B. Phillips's version of *The Epistles of the New Testament, Letters to Young Churches*, they have had the success of selling 100,000 copies in a few months. A similar success was met with C. S. Lewis's titles. Now they have added Father Gerald Vann's *THE DIVINE PITY* to the series. This already well-known 'study of the social implications of the Beatitudes' now joins the glossy backs of novels such as *Moulin Rouge*, and will doubtless achieve a circulation comparable with the other religious books in the series. (Fontana Books; Collins; 2s.).

GEORGE MACLEOD, leader of the Iona Community, in the Alex Wood Memorial lecture for 1956, gave a very individualistic and spirited explanation of the sudden appearance, particularly in America, of a movement to 'community' in various religious bodies. He holds that a united Christendom is an impossibility, but that religious men and women are realizing that individualism in the present era of secularism is not enough and that some at least must break away from the life of the day and enter into close co-operation together in some sort of 'retreat'. He considers that we may well be entering the Age of the Spirit. His lecture *CHURCH PROSPECT* is published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, price 1s. 6d.

* * *

EXTRACTS

MOUNT CARMEL, the Carmelite Quarterly edited from Wincanton, Somerset, contains a helpful article in its Spring issue on illness as a type of religious life. The authoress discusses the various aspects of religious life, and in particular the vows as reflected in the life of the invalid. With regard to the second vow she writes:

It may be difficult for the invalid who is not bound by any vow of chastity to see any connection between his condition and the virtue of that state. There is no doubt, however, that God can use ill health as a means of calling a man or woman to keep their hearts for him alone. To many illness means curtailment of opportunities for close friendship and for love and marriage. To some this loss will be the greatest part of the burden of ill health and the suffering of their

lonely and loveless state will seem too hard to bear with peace of mind. . . . Recognized as God's call to more intimate union with him such sorrow is shot through with joy, and the pain, though it remains unassuaged, becomes a welcome guest. Gradually the invalid will learn how he may co-operate with his condition and uniting his heart to the Sacred Heart of Jesus he will learn that even his dearest friendships are but poor shadows of the love that exists in the Heart of God. . . . He may be sure that God, who has called him to this dark knowledge, will give him courage and faith to walk in the path of chastity.

It is worth while recalling that St Thomas says that in religious life all physical mortifications are ordered to the perfection of chastity. In this way all the physical pains of the invalid may be directed towards the perfecting of this whole-making virtue.

* * *

SPIRITUAL LIFE, the American Carmelite Quarterly, has an interesting Spring issue devoted to the question of Prayer. Mother Keyes, head of the Philosophy Department at Maryville College, St Louis, provides a balanced appraisal of the relation between Prayer and Art. While recognizing the dangers of idolatry that lies in the creative faculty of man, she shows how art can assist man in raising his heart to God.

However, we must keep ourselves calm and remember that art is not the one thing necessary, Bad taste is not always a *culpa* but rather a *poena peccati*, and like all punishments may be bitterly medicinal. But if we ourselves are responsible for the making of anything, let us see that is made well for the glory of God. Only so shall we draw nigh to God and become like him. Good intentions will not supply for lack of vision and lack of skill. It is not enough to say 'Lord, Lord' and to work in religious subject matter. Ours is the more difficult task of putting our best into all our work, and yet worshipping neither it nor ourselves, laying it completely aside in those Sabbath moments within our day when we are invited to enter into the cloud, and we shall return to pour down fruitfulness upon the earth of our art, which in one sense does not matter, and in another matters most terribly. By itself, like all things that are made, it is nothing. But it is not by itself. 'It lasteth and it ever shall, because God loveth it' (Mother Julian).

This sound advice should be considered not only by the professional artist or craftsman, but by every man and woman, for by nature he or she is a creative animal and therefore is engaged in some way or other in making things.