

REVIEWS

TYPES OF HOLINESS

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

SCOTLAND OF THE SAINTS. By D. D. C. Pochin Mould. (Batsford; 21s.)

Let us begin with the distinction that holiness is the perfection of man by charity, but that man differs from man by natural background, upbringing and personality, so that this perfection will have every variety. It can be safely said then that there is a type of Celtic saint when the Celt is thus perfected by charity. Dr Pochin Mould attempts to correlate the nature of the Scots rocks with the type of Scots saint who laid the first foundations for the church of the Island of Saints; and she is right to begin with the geology of the land. It was perhaps too great an undertaking, for she jumps from the geology of Scotland to St Ninian of the fourth century without much explanation; but the photographs with which the book, being a Batsford book, is richly endowed reveal the hills and the sea, the lochs and the islands which helped to form those early saints. The photographs reveal also the effect of that holiness upon the stone in the early christian crosses and monuments. The book is only a beginning and attempts too much as a sort of guide-book to the remains of the Celtic Church; nevertheless it begins in the right way. It is only from that point of view that we can understand the disputes about Easter and the style of hair-cut which otherwise seem so futile to the modern. Easter was the centre of their year as for the rest of early Christendom, and their whole life was 'geared to it'. And the tonsure of the monks had probably 'been copied from the druids'. These observances had helped to form the great roving, tender-hearted, nature-loving saints of Scotland who found the voice of God echoing among the rocks and the hand of God in the beasts and monsters of the hills and lochs; no wonder, then, that their descendants clung to their ancient heritage.

SAINTS FOR NOW. Edited by Clare Boothe Luce. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

The type varies from place to place, age to age and person to person because, as the editor of this book of essays writes, 'the holiness of any saint is partial and derivative'. The first reason for variety, then, is because Christ alone, from whom they all derive, is wholly perfect. But there is another reason. 'As to their diversity', Mrs Boothe Luce continues, 'F. J. Sheed says that whenever we meet the saints in numbers, we experience great relief from monotony. "Men are in their essential personality irreducibly diverse; but sin blots out the distinction and reduces the diversity." Sin takes all the clear colour out of a man. . . . The word "holy" derives from the Anglo-Saxon *halig*—whole or healthy. The saints

are the healthy. The holy man is the only man who can be all he really is, by nature and by temperament.' This diversity in unity makes it possible for the present man or woman to find the type that appeals to him or to her from every period and clime. Alfred Noyes chooses St John the Divine, 'the beloved disciple' is particularly beloved to him because St John heard and understood those words of comfort to the doubter: 'If it were not so I would have told you.' St Augustine appeals to Rebecca West because of his truthfulness which makes his vivid convictions so immensely important. George Lamb discovered that St Simeon Stylites could sit still and do nothing and so reached his 'height of holiness'—'a living reproach to the active city-dweller'. Kate O'Brien leaves St Teresa to consider St Francis Xavier in view of his generosity. And so all the types and styles of holiness find their admirers and provide models for the modern to follow Christ; for which reason the galaxy of well-known writers who have made their choice in *Saints for Now* will appeal with more than average interest to the average Christian.

NEWMAN. By Louis Bouyer de l'Oratoire. (Cerf and Blackfriars; n.p.)

NEWMAN'S WAY. By Sean O'Faolain. (Longmans; 25s.)

Cardinal Newman is definitely a type, and a type that appeals to some Englishmen though not to all. Whether his holiness had the strength and stature of saintliness is another question, and it is perhaps surprising that his appeal as 'a saint for now' has caught the Frenchman, Père Bouyer. Certainly the shining intellectual honesty and truthfulness that captivated Rebecca West in St Augustine are here to capture any modern reader. But Père Bouyer goes further and is prepared to include in the picture of a saint the extreme sensitiveness and delicate temperament that so often disconcert the English enthusiast for the Cardinal and which in the Cardinal's life-time so often caused pain and discomfort to his great contemporaries like Wiseman and Faber. If Newman is raised to the altars of the Church we shall indeed have a very unique type of holiness, with that sensitivity bordering on a psychological defect and that sense of his own history-making which led him to write so carefully in each volume of his library still to be viewed in the Brompton Oratory. This biography has in any case the advantage of putting into a whole what Maisie Ward and her father have done between them in their volumes on the Young and the Later Newman, but while it owes a great deal to these two predecessors it adds this unashamed enthusiasm for a type of holiness, which will indeed satisfy the modern introspective Christian.

Mr O'Faolain, however, approaches the special type of Newman's holiness in its setting in his family. He had first thought of calling his book: 'A Genius in the Family, Or a Blessed Nuisance'. He finds the future Cardinal set in curious family surroundings which 'invite irreverency' and follows him till this background falls away and Newman