

## REVIEWS

TO HEAVEN WITH DIANA. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 18s.)

*To Heaven With Diana* is almost two books in one. Two-thirds of it is a translation from the Latin of fifty-six letters of Bl. Jordan of Saxony, O.P., St Dominic's successor as master-general. Fifty of them are to the Dominican nun, Bl. Diana d'Andalo, O.P. and her community at Bologna, thirty-seven being addressed to Diana herself. Four are to an unknown nun, and one each to Br Stephen, Provincial of Lombardy, and the brethren at St Jacques, Paris. Fr Vann does not tell us if these are all the extant letters or whether this is the first English translation. He says that 'It is impossible to capture and hold in English the full fragrance of Jordan's Latin' (p. 19). That may be: but he has provided a gracious and pleasing version of a precious classic of primitive Dominican spirituality.

For 'Jordan more than any other one man after St Dominic himself created the *spirit* of the Order' (p. 54). A highly gifted person of irresistible charm, he was chosen to succeed the founder in preference to any of his earlier and more intimate companions. He ruled the order from 1222 until his untimely death by drowning in 1237, and is said to have clothed over a thousand novices. 'He gave to it a gaiety and an informality in its daily life which are amongst its greatest treasures, for they express and enshrine a whole theology of the religious life . . .' (*ibid.*).

A fifty-page introductory essay, full of quotations from the letters, studies his personality and spiritual teaching in the context of his relations with Bl. Diana and her sisters. Many of Fr Vann's favourite themes recur, including an effective exposition of the role of contemplation in the life of action, so perfectly realized in the place of the nuns in the Dominican order and the place of Diana in Jordan's life and labours. The concluding pages are an *apologia* for what writers of another way of thinking might frown on as 'particular friendships'.

Some readers may be put off by the catchy title, the rather garish jacket, or what may sound like the sentimental tone of parts of the letters. One needs to remember that the Latin *Carissima, dilectissima* which can only be rendered as 'dearest', 'beloved', are almost technical terms in the epistles, and in encyclicals and pastorals, and that Jordan uses them in addressing all his correspondents. His love was deep and tender but there was nothing exclusive about it. He was one of those who have 'fully realized in themselves the ideal given us under the symbol of the sacred heart of Christ, his *human* love of men' (p. 52). It is in this, and in his broad, joyous spirituality, steeped in the scrip-

tures and the liturgy, that the seven-hundred-year-old letters of this Friar have so much to offer us today.

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

THE ONE TRUE KIRK. By Ronald Walls. (Burns & Oates; 15s.)

At any time the story of a Scottish Presbyterian minister's return to the auld kirk of Rome is news. It does not, alas, happen very often. Such a story appearing at this time has an added interest and poignancy. Four hundred years ago the old religion of Scotland was swept away, and with it much of the warmth and romance of Scotland's past. Nearly two hundred years later there was a brief interlude of romance when the Catholic Prince Charles Edward set foot in Scotland. That passed and once again the glowering spirit of Knox brooded over Scotland. But those defiant words of Mary Queen of Scots, 'Your kirk is not my kirk, Mr Knox', still echo far beyond Holyrood.

Mr Ronald Walls heard a variant of Mary Stuart's words when, as an Edinburgh University student holidaying with a Catholic family in Hungary, a girl said to him: 'My religion goes back to St Peter: yours goes only to Luther'. This Hungarian holiday was one of the signposts on the way home to the old faith. There were many others, meetings with Catholics, discovering Catholic books, such as the late Mgr Ronald Knox's *The Belief of Catholics*. All the way through Mr Walls' fascinating story one has the impression that he was bound to end up in the old faith. There is more than a hint of 'High Church', which may surprise a Catholic reader who has lived among old-style Presbyterians.

Even so, an authentic picture of the Scottish kirk emerges. We meet the die-hard elder hostile to any innovation that smacks of 'popery'. We meet, too, the kindly village folks. We share in their daily lives; we learn what the solemn communion means to them, and come to understand other features of the Presbyterian way of life.

Mr Walls tells a moving and, at the same time, a joyous story, which is a hopeful sign in the land that, before John Knox, was the *filia specialis* of the Holy See.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

MAN AND MORALS. By D. J. B. Hawkins. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

Here, in a hundred concise pages, with his usual reliability and practised style of exposition, Dr Hawkins offers the traditional version of 'morals without religion'. While the study of ethics does eventually disclose a certain incompleteness which points naturally to religion for its complement, religion is not the *basis* of ethics. The starting-point is the nature of man—it is round this point, in fact, that all moral argu-