

ACTION & PASSION

MANY people were intensely grateful for the author's *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*, one of the most deeply thought and spiritually profitable studies in the Christian understanding of life to appear in recent years. They will certainly want to possess his new book, *The Stature of Waiting*, which develops certain aspects of the author's thought in the earlier book, presses it home with similar inspiration and suggestion, and is not afraid to leave in the mind that kind of interest and question that are a summons to take what the author has to say into one's own living and thinking and go on with it.

Canon Vanstone enquires into what Judas did when he "handed over" Jesus to the authorities, observes the idea in other places in the New Testament, is led to consider certain particularly resonant words and phrases in St. John's Gospel, and comes to a new precision regarding the "passion" of Jesus. His view is that our Lord's "suffering" has no primary connotation of pain, but consists in his being "handed over," exposed to events, to wait upon and receive the decisions and deeds of others.

He then turns to the world of today and finds this transition from action to passion an increasing characteristic of life. We are a "subject" people, not only to chance and all the ills that flesh is heir to, but also to a growing number of forces and agencies over which we have no control. There is an almost infinite number of forms of this status of patient; but there is no doubt that, even if we actually acquiesce in it, it is with resentment and frustration.

At the root of this impatience and

THE STATURE OF WAITING. By W. H. Vanstone. (Darton, Longman and Todd, £4.50)

restiveness is the familiar culture which for long enough has exalted activity and independence; there is also the theology which is similarly orientated in its understanding of God. The posture suggested by this culture and theology is a mistaken

By

NEVILLE WARD

stance. Forms of "being done to" and "waiting" will increasingly determine the way in which human life is in the main expressed. In his approach to life and, if he is religious, in his spiritual attitude, man needs to learn how to absorb and negotiate this development.

Canon Vanstone now turns back to the passion of Jesus. He claims that Jesus' being "handed over" to life and the world, far from being his misfortune, is to be seen as in part the clue to his triumph. The image of Jesus waiting in the garden of Gethsemane provides him with many considerations in which to develop this thought and to see in the Saviour the revelation of God as *non passibilis sed passus*.

The two chapters "The road to Gethsemane" and "The God who waits" have a fine depth and eloquence that immediately suggest that they are going to be very carefully pondered. The question for Christian spirituality is whether or not the ordinary and infinitely various forms of waiting and "being done to" have in them some character in which the image of God as revealed in Jesus can be discerned.

In the final chapter the author expounds the relation between such

concepts as waiting, caring, mattering and meaning. "The image of God which is perceived in man's manifold capacity for activity within the world is to be perceived also in the range and variety of his capacity for passion—in the many ways and circumstances in which he waits upon the world." "God also waits; and it is in waiting that he invests the world with the possibility and power of meaning."

It is a theme of extraordinary interest. The vision of man's "almost unbelievable" dignity in his character as dependent on the world, as needing, as recipient, certainly calls for the twentieth century to consider a reevaluation of its values. Maybe the psychology of the argument is not quite as commanding as the spirituality. It takes an effort to follow the author in his final elevated conclusion.

Perhaps for more light one should look in the direction of Easter. However, once again Canon Vanstone has given us a book which is a theological excitement, a profound spiritual experience and a help to new holds on the truth.

Triumphalist

By MICHAEL GREEN

THIS is Colin Urquhart's sequel to the story of his work at Luton, *When the Spirit Comes*. It is lively, readable and well written.

Colin Urquhart is rightly celebrated as one of the leaders of the charismatic renewal in this country, and the present book shows the spread of his ministry into other parts of the world; he has, moreover, the ability to get through to ordinary readers in a way that few Christian authors can match. And yet I found his book strangely disturbing.

It is yet another of the "inspirational" books full of miracles and the personal pronoun. It is prone to exaggeration. A glowing picture emerges of the community at The Hyde, but its problems receive less attention. The author feels able to record comments on his meetings such as "Just like Pentecost" or see them as a re-enactment of the Welsh Revival. He says that he asks those who have been healed at his meetings to stand and indicate: this is not always the case, and sometimes there is little evidence afterwards to sub-

ANGIE CARTER, just 16 and about to take her "O"-levels but threatening to go off and get married, had pains in her stomach. The family doctor was called in, found nothing clinically wrong and prescribed a sedative.

In the living-room on the way out the doctor found Angie's hard-drinking father in a wrought-up state about her boy-friend—who, he said, she would marry "over his dead body." Later that night, after a flare-up with Angie, he died in hospital from a heart-attack, Angie's father and mother had constantly quarrelled: she an overbearing woman who had had a bad time at Angie's birth and a recent mastectomy and found her husband's attentions distasteful.

A few weeks later Angie gave birth in hospital to a premature baby boy after an overdose of drugs, heavy smoking and excessive slimming to try to hide her pregnancy. Although in a bad way, Angie discharged herself from hospital. She couldn't get on with her censorious and domineer-

IN THAT CASE. By Alastair Campbell and Roger Higgs. (Darton, Longman & Todd, £4.50)

ing mother and set up on her own with her baby, her boy friend gone and tormented by memories of her father, with whom relations had been too close.

In the end it all boiled over with Angie throwing everything that reminded her of her father out of the window, causing such a commotion

By DOUGLAS BROWN

that the police were called in. Angie was taken back into hospital, the baby put into temporary care, and the last we hear of Angie is that she is living with an aunt, seems to be on the mend, and is looking for a job.

This is the scenario conjured up by the joint authors of this book to raise yet again a number of extremely important issues in contemporary society—above all, to what extent should someone who is sick be regarded as a person and to what extent as just a case? Where is the dividing-line, and how is it established?

Alastair Campbell is a senior lecturer in Christian ethics at Edinburgh University and was editor of the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. Roger Higgs is a South London GP and director of the Department of General Practice Studies at King's College Medical School.

★ ★ ★

This is an uncomfortable and timely book, coming as it does when more and more people seem to be uneasy about the overall effectiveness of our health care—more so in England and Wales than in Scotland. The shortcomings of all who had to do with Angie are sharply assessed. What of the GP when he was first called, but with his busy evening surgery nagging away at the back of his mind? Could a little more time and sensitivity have prevented the whole tragic sequence? And so on to the young woman house-physician to whom Angie nearly got through, the social worker, the health visitor, the police, the psychiatrist.

One of the biggest problems seems to be how to get all these professional workers to argue rationally together about moral and human issues, to clarify varying concepts, to avoid emotional language or appeal to authority or, indeed, evading the main issue in joint discussions about what should be done about a sick and troubled person. These issues are discussed with outstanding care and expertise and in clear, uncluttered and jargon-free style, making this a work that should be on the bookshelves—and referred to often—by all concerned with healing and caring.

Strange, though, that it never even considers the clergy when it comes to counselling and support. A wise priest might equally have prevented the sorry sequence at source, indeed might have calmed the round of uneasy minds more effectively than any.



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SAINTLY DIARY

PAUL JENNINGS will be known to some as the first humour columnist of *The Observer* and as the author of a number of humorous and children's books. This present work enters a saint for each day of the year, has a paragraph on the life and witness of the saint, and has also an extract from a notable diary. The saints seem to be those mainly acknowledged by the Church of Rome, though some Orthodox, from after the division between the two Churches are also listed.

The facts tend to be of a historical and occasionally humorous nature. Occasionally the fact of holiness is neatly stated. Thus we read of St. Alexander Nevsky that, although he defeated in battle many of Russia's enemies, he said: "God is on the side not of force but of truth and justice." We read of St. John Bosco, pioneer in caring for and training poor boys, a man of renowned gentleness.

What we read of St. Dotto, St. Julia, St. Desiderius, St. Keverne and a number of others seems markedly less interesting, whilst the entries for such as Catherine of Siena and Irenaeus are what any small book on saints might give us. Had Mr. Jennings used the most recent revision and ordering of the Roman Church and added to it, not only some Orthodox saints but also some noted in the calendar of the Anglican Alternative Service Book, such as Wilberforce and Herbert, the interest of his writing would have been increased.

The diarists chosen are such people as John Evelyn, Rose Macaulay, Thomas Gray, T. E. Lawrence,

A FEAST OF DAYS. By Paul Jennings. (Macdonald, £8.95)

James Boswell and Elizabeth Barrett. The extracts are often astute, charming or morally challenging. They do not always relate notably to the character of the saint with whom they are joined, but this seems not to matter for a bedside book. In any case the detached insights of the great diarists must come near to God's sight, the gaining of which is one of sanctity's aims.

KEITH WALKER



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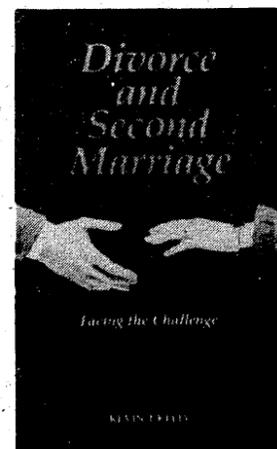
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