

HEARD AND SEEN

Great Scott!

SEVEN hundred architects, it seems, have already applied for the published conditions for the Liverpool Cathedral competition, and that in itself must be counted a resounding blow for architectural sanity. Whatever design emerges from this forest of hopeful essays, it can't be said that the field is anything but open. The conditions themselves (prefaced by the unusual promise that the architects will have the help of the prayers of the Liverpool children) are admirable in their insistence on freeing the structure from the tyranny of style, though it is right that the existing Lutyens crypt is to be organically included in the design. We need anticipate no ecclesiastic's wandering hand, sketching in a pointed arch here and there to make the whole thing more churchy.

A walk through Kensington, High Street and Church Street alike, provides so cautionary an experience—'great Scott!' must be the mildest of the exclamations appropriate to the two rebuilt Catholic churches there—that one can hope that never again will ecclesiastical authority prefer safety first and leave sense a very long way behind. The weak pastiche of inherited Gothic and insurance office *chic* is perhaps not much worse than many buildings recently built in London (shades of Bracken House!), but the Church's public offering of her face for view ought perhaps to be free from make-up? Maybe the recent award of the Gold Medal of the R.I.B.A. to Professor Nervi may mean a belated recognition by British architects of the virtues of honesty, and of concrete in particular. And if brick is to be used, why can't it be *used*, one asks, as the splendid dark masses of the interior of Bentley's cathedral give place—very gradually because of the astronomical cost—to the sheets of gleaming marble, so expensively moulded to the irrelevant detail of 1905?

Encyclicals and Roman directives have constantly urged the need for diocesan commissions, composed of experts able to advise, and in their proper sphere entitled to insist, on the appropriate design and furnishing of new churches. But it can still too often happen that Father X's taste—or that of his bishop—can impose on a church (which he may not even live to see) conditions which may indeed tell us much about what *he* likes or doesn't like. The point is, what does it tell us about God? It is the amenable architect who is most likely to be chosen, and all over the country there are churches which could be appropriately described as amenities.

For the last few years the 'Visual Arts Week', held at Spode House at Whitsun, has brought together an increasing number of architects and artists whose hope is to offer their skill to the Church. The co-operation between priest and artist, at a level of respect for the proper function of each, is indispensable for any improvement in the lamentable state of Christian art in this country, and in this matter it is perhaps the priest who has most to learn. It is for him to explain what are the directives which the Church gives to ensure that the building fulfils its purpose: the laws of liturgical worship are normative indeed. But their realization in terms of material and design is the artist's work: it is his function to preserve the tradition without falling into the fallacy of traditionalism, the canonization of a style as though it were in itself sacred. The gradual building up of a body of informed opinion among priests and artists about the problems they share is of the greatest importance if the Church is once more to become not merely the patron of the arts but their best defender. For defence they need, against the philistinism of com-

mercial advantage or merely the mood of 'I know what I like' as well as against the mere anarchy of so much fashionable aesthetic.

PEREGRINE WALKER

REVIEWS

THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN ENGLAND. Volume III: 'The Tudor Age'. By Dom David Knowles, Fellow of Peterhouse and Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge. (Cambridge University Press; 55s.)

In this third and final volume of his history Dom David Knowles completes the greatest work on English Monasticism. He will remain, for the foreseeable future, the main authority upon this subject. He has so many gifts. He has a power of penetrating to the mind and usages of the monastic centuries. He uses a profound scholarship to enable us to see again the monks as they lived and to gather the precise meaning of monastic ordinances. In this respect his account of the actual life of the restored monks of Westminster in Queen Mary's reign is unsurpassed. Another aspect of this quality is revealed in Dom David's careful analysis of the exact degree of sincerity in the revelations of the Nun of Kent. The book contains a delightful tribute to the faithful members of the London Charterhouse. The frontispiece is Zurbarán's ideal portrait of Prior John Houghton now in the Museo Provincial at Cadiz.

The assessment of character is always a valuable element in Dom David's work and the account of the last Benedictine abbots of Colchester, Reading and Glastonbury is masterly. An especially revealing picture is that of the last abbot of Woburn. The book is likewise perfectly fair in the account given of Thomas Cromwell's visitors. Dom David has a clear sense of the unity of background of the divergent characters. 'Henry himself', he writes on page 197, 'Fisher, Gardiner, Cranmer, Longland and the rest were all well-educated men of considerable intellectual power: the king, indeed, in his early manhood, had seemed an admirable Crichton.' At several stages of the book there is reflected the very deep influence of Erasmus.

The two first studies in this series, the first volume of *The Religious Houses in England* and the preceding volume entitled *The Monastic Order in England*, must have been easier to construct than the two final volumes. The choice of 1485 as the opening date for the present work was in a sense inevitable; but it meant much more in secular than it did in religious history. Dom David, however, makes the fullest use of the relatively sparse material for the last fifty years of the monastic life. The age of the monastic chroniclers was now past. The Butley chronicle is quoted (page 128) as the sole survivor. Dom David also provides us with a suggestive analysis of *The Rites of Durham*. These are in effect both fragments, but the account of the journal of William More, prior of Worcester, is one of the most valuable elements in this whole study. There we see Dom David's remarkable understanding of the most obscure parts of monastic finance. He is without a rival as an examiner of documentary sources bearing upon the details of the religious life.

His chapter entitled 'Humanism at Evesham' is entirely novel. It is a study of a collection of one hundred and sixty letters written within a space of three years by a monk of Evesham and recently transcribed from the Peniarth MSS by Dom Hugh Aveling of Ampleforth. The majority of his correspondents were members of other Benedictine houses, but there were also letters to Cistercians and to secular priests. They appear for the most part to have been at Oxford with the writer. The correspondence seems to reflect some interests of the young priests just back from the university. Dom David in discussing