

EXTRACTS

DOM BEDE GRIFFITHS, who has often honoured the pages of this journal with profoundly contemplative writing, some months ago departed from Pluscarden in Scotland to make a contemplative Benedictine foundation in India in North Bangalore. In *The Commonwealth* (New York, \$9.50 per annum) for October 21 he has published an article that amounts to a statement of the ideals of his new foundation.

Throughout its history, India has been devoted above almost all peoples to the search for God. . . . The characteristic of this religion is that it has always ranked contemplation and the contemplative life as the supreme goal of human life. Some of the earliest Indian scriptures were the work of men who retired into the forest to live lives of solitude in meditation and asceticism. To this day it remains the ideal of Hindu religion that after passing through the two first stages of life, that of the student and the householder, a man should pass on to the higher stage of renunciation of the world and contemplation in preparation for death. A similar ideal of contemplation as the end of life was held among the ancient Greeks, but, for the Greek, contemplation always tended to centre on the nature of man and the universe. In India, on the other hand, contemplation has always been concerned not with man or nature, but with the ultimate reality, the true Self, which is the ground of all existence.

Father Griffiths goes on to say that in the West we have developed the science of man and of the universe but lost the knowledge of God. And after showing the basis of Indian thought as intuitive and contemplative, he relates this to the Platonic tradition of the West. He continues:

St Thomas's conception of God is identical with that of the Eastern tradition. In the question of the relation between the universe and God, St Thomas introduces an exact conception of creation which clarifies the Eastern tradition, but leaves it essentially unchanged. And in the matter of the knowledge of God by contemplation, St Thomas clearly recognizes a mode of knowledge above reason and faith . . . an infused wisdom.

Catholicism gives the precision which is lacking in the East, upholds at once the transcendence of God and his immanence in all creation, and seals it with the doctrine of the Incarnation. We must therefore explore this affinity between the East and the West.

Then we should perhaps be able to lead the East to see that their own tradition is wonderfully fulfilled in Catholicism. . . . At the

same time we should find our own faith enriched and enlarged. . . .

We have to revive the contemplative life among ourselves.

But in India there has not been a contemplative community until now; and now is the time, for India's independence has been marked by the appointment of a Cardinal of its own and a growing hierarchy of indigenous clergy.

There is surely a great need for the foundation following the traditional pattern of the monastic life, centred on the sacred liturgy and giving contemplation its place as the supreme object of life. . . .

In the monastic life both work and study have their place. A monastery must strive to be self-supporting; it will aim at having its own farm and garden . . . at doing all necessary work for itself. But all this work will be kept strictly subordinate to the one object of contemplation and love of God. . . . In the same way a monastery will have its regular course of studies. These will be based on the Scriptures and the Fathers. . . . But it will not neglect the study of philosophy and theology.

So Dom Bede outlines the ideal of his Indian monastery in which the study of the Scriptures and St Thomas will go hand in hand with the study of Eastern thought, all subjected to the life of contemplation. His foundation should surely flourish and attract many subjects both from the East and the West.

CROSS CURRENTS (quarterly, New York, \$4.0 per annum) one of the liveliest of American Catholic periodicals, which culls the best from European and American writings, has a stimulating autumn number in which St Thérèse of Lisieux features. Friedrich Heer had contributed an article summing up the recent disclosures about the saint in the German publication *Hochland*. This is here translated and reveals St Thérèse as the tremendous and vigorous saint that she was. Here is a sample of the long article.

Thérèse's 'little way' is a daring drawing within, a thing which the great mystics of the past millenia had gained through prayer, the development of God within man through man's reception into the bosom of trinitarian Love, in the midst of our life, here and today. . . . Thérèse goes still further; she has the power to lift the world up into God.

But there is no space here to cover the argument by which the author supports his championing of St Thérèse.

In the September issue of the new Carmelite Review *Spiritual Life* which also comes from the U.S.A. a contributor gives a useful summary of St Teresa's (of Avila this time) method of prayer. And the whole issue is devoted to 'Contemplation'.