This is not another collection of lives of the saints! Professor Brown has chosen 33 men and women from the vast list of saints, mostly identified in our liturgical calendar, with the purpose of drawing out how they might challenge us today towards a contemporary holiness. Therefore to explore this book with the expectation of gaining a neat summary of hagiographic detail will only bring disappointment. Rather, Professor Brown draws from four periods of Christian history - the Early Church, the Medieval Church, the Reformation Period and the Modern World - lives of Christians whose responses to the settings of their day also throw a piercing shaft of light upon our own generation with its nagging needs.

Saints are certainly not without sin, as the author rather enjoys reminding his readers. 'Their strength lay in the degree to which, while remaining in those limitations, they also transcended them' (p.158) he says concerning the lives of Archbishops Hannington and Luwum. The material selected, written in short chapters, contains much thought for prayer and is available therefore to be used as a companion to our times of quiet and contemplation. It helps to put a lot of things into perspective. It often disturbs and so demands an urgent resolution.

Damian SSF
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A small room carved out of the wall of a catacomb, used as mortuary chapels, and in Roman times, for Christian worship. 

Translation: movement of relics.

Basilica: structure with an axial layout, central nave and side aisles with at least one apse end.

Martyrium: a church or other edifice built at a site, especially a tomb, associated with a Christian martyr or saint; often centrally planned layout.

Through the window as I write, I can see the long foreshore of Westward Ho!, receiving in ordered sequence the powerful waves of the Atlantic Ocean. From this coast, my forebears, pioneer spirits indeed, were inspired by that mysterious life-force, of which we know so little, to transfer their enthusiasm and vitality to America, the land destined to become the intuitive Sixth Race of the future.

Planes, beyond the comprehension of the average mind, may invoke the Fire at times of international crisis. There is the psychic record of such a powerful spiritual ceremonial, presided over by the Master Rakoczi, close to this coast, which is likely to endure for many years. Satan, of the six eyes and six wings, forever trying to escape his own torment within the confines of the ice, remains imprisoned in the heart of the circle—each of his three faces devouring one of three men. Satan devouring three men (14th century) (Wikimedia Commons).

Upon seeing this ghastly sight, Dante's trek through Hell comes to a terrifying end. Virgil leaps into action, placing the frightened pilgrim on his back and then dodging the wings of Satan as he climbs onto the demon's back. Dante can do nothing but hold on for dear life as Virgil moves them first down, past the frozen waters, and then back up along Satan's legs toward the surface of the earth.