

chapter, beginning with Pentecost, instead of being the story of the building up of the body of Christ, is a record of the external spread of Christianity. If you prefer to think of the seven deacons in terms of the Converts' Aid Society, as Fr Roche does, rather than in terms of chapter eleven of the Book of Numbers, naturally you will be puzzled by their activities. If you think that the Twelve Apostles are twelve because that is the product of Trinity times the four winds of the earth, not because they are Princes in the new Israel, you will be able to conclude by dissolving the missionary Church into a welter of statistics. You will be able, finally, to deduce the need for missionary work from the mere number of the unconverted, not from the fact that we live in the age of Christ, an age marked by the messianic signs of the preaching of the Gospel to the poor (cf. pp. 22-3!), and the coming up of the nations to worship in Jerusalem.

J.S.

UNDER THE NET. By Iris Murdoch (Chatto and Windus; 12s. 6d.)

One might have feared the worst, A first novel by an Oxford philosophy don, and a woman at that, dealing with literary hacks in London (and including an excursion to the Paris Left Bank) could so easily have been pretentious: an existentialist cautionary tale with clever trimmings. The enthusiastic reception which *Under the Net* has received is perhaps due to its being so unlike what might have been expected, and indeed so unlike the anguished pattern of the contemporary English novel. It is written with spirit and an unflagging sense of the ludicrous, and if the conversation betrays (even as a joke) the linguistic preoccupations of Oxford common rooms, it is soon lost in the elaborate adventures of the narrator, a down-at-heel Irish translator and general literary odd-job-man, which involves him with film tycoons, performing Alsatian dogs and left-wing pubs and politics. It scarcely matters that later recollection will probably conclude that Miss Murdoch's novel has been overpraised, its freshness and picturesque enthusiasm too highly regarded simply because so unlooked for. In the meantime one can welcome with pleasure a new novelist of excellent invention and unusual wit.

P.W.

NOTICES

THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMP, when it was rediscovered in 1934, was at once acknowledged as a most important addition to English literature, though its position in the stream of English spirituality was necessarily more ambiguous. It now achieves the canonization of being included in *The World's Classics* (Oxford; 5s.) and the modernized version prepared by Colonel Butler-Bowden is once more used, with a valuable introduction by Dr R. W. Chambers.

MARY IN OUR LIFE by William G. Most (New York; Kenedy, \$4.00) is a comprehensive study of the Marian tradition within the Church. Dr Most provides exact scriptural and patristic evidence and allies it to his exposition of devotion to our Lady. His book is a useful compendium and appears opportunely in a year that is specially dedicated to the honour of Mary.

THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF DOM JOHN CHAPMAN (Sheed and Ward, 12s. 6d.) was reviewed in BLACKFRIARS on its first appearance in 1935 at length and with considerable reservations. The controversy aroused by Abbot Chapman's teaching on prayer may seem a matter for specialists, and there can be little doubt that the reprinting of his *Letters* will meet with a generous welcome.

GOD AND THE SUPERNATURAL, 'a Catholic statement of the Christian Faith' by M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., Christopher Dawson, C. C. Martindale, S.J., and E. I. Watkin, first appeared thirty-four years ago, and the reprint of the abridged edition (Sheed and Ward, 12s. 6d.) is a reminder of how much is owed by English Catholics to its four contributors who have since achieved such eminence. Some of the papers' emphases may seem to belong too closely to their period, and Mr Watkin's essay on the Mystical Body in particular suffers from having been written before the remarkable development in recent years of theological writing on the doctrine (reaching its definitive form in the present Pope's encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*). But the book remains a most cogent and clearly written exposition of the faith of Catholics.

MARGARET, PRINCESS OF HUNGARY by S. M. C. (Blackfriars Publications, 6s. 6d.), first written soon after the canonization of St Margaret in 1943, now appears in a second edition. This simple and sympathetic story has a special significance now when St Margaret's own country is once more undergoing such grievous trials.

THE SPIRITUAL MAXIMS OF ST FRANCIS OF SALES, edited and with an introduction by C. F. Kelley (Longmans, 8s. 6d.) is an attractive anthology from the most quotable of saints. There must always be differences of opinion about the validity of arbitrary selections, released from the restraint of their context, but the critic is himself forestalled when St Francis says of speaking: 'Be brief when you cannot be good'.

THE HEART OF THE WORLD (Burns Oates, 7s. 6d.), by Dom Aelred Watkin, is a valuable essay in the sort of spirituality, robust and Christocentric, which is necessary today but which is too rarely encountered, at least in the English language. Dom Aelred brings to the theme of the Sacred Heart the cool moderation and biblical strength of Benedictine tradition, and his book is most welcome.