

Much the most important of these three books is the one by Fr Baum. Like Fr Démann, a convert Jew, he is well known in ecumenical circles. Indeed, he is a consultor for the forthcoming council. He sets out here to show, by a careful analysis of the gospels, the Acts and the Pauline epistles, what Jesus and the first Christians thought of the Jews. The crux of his argument is of course the famous chapters in Romans, but he reaches what he has to say about them by way of a thorough discussion of all the other relevant passages. His final conclusions are optimistic for the outcome of the Jewish problem and, as he says, not altogether indisputable. It would be unfair, however, to question them in the limits of a brief review. This is a book which has to be read over a period of months, with the sacred text by one's side, and the great benefits it affords, above all a deeper sense of the mystery of Israel, will come only through such patient reading. This is, in fact, one of the most valuable books that have ever been written in aid of more understanding between Jews and Christians.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

CATHERINE DE SIENNE, by J. M. Perrin, O.P.; Aubier, n.p.

This is an important book. The life of St Catherine of Siena has been written many times; sometimes the result is good, sometimes indifferent. But in each case it is the life of the saint in the foreground, with a background of her teaching. In this book it is the doctrine of the Church which is illustrated and exemplified in the life and writings of the saint. According to Père Perrin in his preface, a saint is our contemporary in the mystical body, and through him Christ, who is the author of the whole Church, both shows and gives us something of her plenitude. The difficulty of coming in contact with a personality of another century repays us in so far as it permits us to understand the height of their Christian life, as they exemplify the gospel.

The actual factual life of St Catherine is more or less limited to the first part of the book; rather less than a quarter. Then the author gives an exposition of the apostolic life, in what it consists, its requirements and whence it receives its strength. Finally, there is given a picture of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, showing how its essential holiness is in no way diminished by the individual weaknesses, sins, or even by the vicious life of some of its members. This leads to the crowning point of St Catherine's example and teaching, when our Lord said to her: 'Offer thy life afresh and give thyself no rest. It is for this ministry that I have established thee, thee and all those who follow thee, and who will follow thee. Give thy whole attention and never look back, but always enlarge thy desires'.

All Père Perrin's teaching is illustrated by quotations from the *Dialogue*, the *Letters* and the *Prayers*; quotations given from any source which suits the particular doctrine under discussion. Thus the reader is presented with what might be styled a *Summa* from St Catherine. The amount of research condensed

into these two hundred and forty pages is remarkable. One is left with a sensation of the inadequacy, one might almost say the impertinence, of making any review of them which is not the result of many months of study and meditation.

S. M. CATHERINE, O.P.

MODERN LITERATURE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH, by Martin Turnell; Darton, Longman and Todd, 12s. 6d.

The most radical problem that besets the Christian reader, if he is of an enquiring bent, is that of the influence on literature of belief. How far, in fact, does a writer's faith inhibit or enhance his creative powers? The first chapter of this book takes us from the serene world of accepted pieties which was so immensely steadying and liberating for Chaucer's imagination, to the spiritual crisis in Donne's time, the breakdown of faith which has been the poet's matrix ever since. Religious poetry, in particular, becomes more and more difficult to write. The burden of overcoming the hostile environment, of breaking the spell of scepticism which willy-nilly dominates everybody's outlook, cripples the Christian imagination. Mr Turnell dismisses the efforts of Coventry Patmore and Francis Thompson, and shows that even in as certainly great a poet as Hopkins the isolation of belief from the mainstream of culture, and the exhausting battle to keep belief up at all, prevent him from ever opening into any epic vision. The second chapter is an examination of D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf. Mr Turnell comes to the conclusion that their rejection of faith reduces their explorations of human reality, ultimately, to a baffled impotence which is indistinguishable from the moral dead-end occupied by Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett. The final chapter deals with some explicitly Catholic writers, Claudel, Mauriac and Graham Greene, whose sometimes grave defects are compensated for, Mr Turnell argues, because they are committed to belief in our immortal destiny. It is not, of course, that Graham Greene is a *better* novelist than E. M. Forster, but that he is, to use Mr Turnell's word, *serious*. It is at this point, when one begins to wonder what this 'seriousness' amounts to, if Mr Greene is to be counted as 'serious' and Mr Forster not, that the book stops. It is fair to add that the stringent criticism of Mr Greene is clear and convincing, like most of the analysis of cases which so largely make up the book. The more theoretical passages, however, are a good deal less substantial and satisfying than in Mr Turnell's earlier book on roughly the same theme, *Poetry and Crisis* (1938).

FERGUS KERR, O.P.