

LES PAUVRES DE YAHWE. By A. Gelin. Témoins de Dieu, No. 14; (Cerf: Blackfriars).

In a previous work of outstanding importance despite its slender form (*Les Idées Maitresses de l'Ancien Testament*, Lectio Divina series, No. 2), the Abbé Gelin had suggested the biblical theme of the 'weak things of this world', or the action of God through lowly human instruments. In the present work the theme is worked out in a very readable yet scholarly form. For some years now there has been much study and writing, especially on the Continent, on or around the *anawim* or 'poor ones' of Yahweh who came to play so important, if largely hidden, a part in the spiritual history and contribution of Israel. The Abbé Gelin has admirably summed up the essential history and significance of these folk who were first called 'the poor' by the prophet Sophonias, about 640-630 B.C. 'I will still have among you a poor and lowly people, and they will put their faith in the name of the Lord, this Rest of Israel . . .' (Soph. 3, 12). Thus we have an introductory chapter on the notion and vocabulary of poverty in the Old Testament, then the 'Church' or Assembly of the 'poor' from Sophonias onwards, their spirituality (Chapter III), their later history and Messianic expectations. Then a magnificent section on the *Magnificat* presented as the lowly and humble Maiden's song of poverty, and a chapter on New Testament poverty, which can hardly be dissociated from that *tapeinosis*, or lowliness, humility, which so essentially came into the world with our religion, for (as Mr Gladstone said) 'humility as a sovereign grace is the creation of Christianity'. The last words of the conclusion are a citation from St Theresa of Lisieux: 'Fear not: the more thou art poor, the more will Jesus love you'. This is a lesson which desperately needs to be learnt in the England, even in the Catholic England of today. May we hope that this excellent little book will soon be translated into English:

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## NOTICES

### NON-CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY

SEVERAL books have recently appeared, particularly from Anglican publishers, which set out to provide *Spiritual Guidance* of a traditional kind for the ordinary reader. The first is a work with this title by Fr Shirley Hughson, O.M.C. (Mowbrays; 12s. 6d.), who quotes broadly not only from the Scriptures and the Fathers, but from St Thomas,

Tanqueray, Scaramelli, Vonier and Grou. With such a background we are not surprised to find the traditional scheme set forth. The author insists that all men have an obligation to perfection, but he leaves this point a little vague, having failed to thrust home the teaching of St Thomas that christian perfection is nothing more nor less than charity—Fr Hughson views the matter perhaps too exclusively from the point of obedience to the divine authority of providence. He rightly and courageously links the question of the spiritual life with the Eucharist, though here again he misses a great opportunity in omitting the teaching of the same doctor that the ultimate effect of the Eucharist is actual charity, not merely, as the author states, 'a general means looking to the building up of the spiritual man at every point'. The Love of God is the point of prayer and the christian life, and we have far too long lost sight of this great truth in the analyses of our way to God.

Dr Lumsden Barkway sets out to provide a manual concerning the inner life in *An Introduction to the Inner Life* (Mowbrays; 6s.). He also very rightly links up the inner life with the sacraments and strongly deprecates the modern fashion of turning to oriental, non-sacramental mysticism for inspiration. This he sees as leading to a vacuum and a 'sterile poverty of thought'. So sound is Dr Barkway's general teaching that it is a pity to find him castigating a conception of Jesuit obedience which is far from objective fact—a misunderstanding which leads us to think that the fulness of the Church's teaching on the nature and practice of obedience would have set the seal on his book and made it a very useful manual indeed for those who wish to lead the christian life seriously and fully.

Dr Albert Belden, again, in *The Practice of Prayer* (Rockliff; 6s.) provides the reader with a very practical and telling invitation to the spiritual life in terms of prayer which he sees as leading the Christian, in its heights, to the identification of the soul with the divine desire, so that the Christian prays with God and not merely to him. But once more a still deeper appreciation of the traditional teaching would have given his work an even greater strength and value. He sees God as limiting himself by the creation of human liberty so that the desire of God holds within it the suggestion of something not yet fulfilled. Humanly speaking we may get away with that sort of picture, but when it comes to discovering the heights we need to be surer about the relation of free will and grace. However, we must conclude by saying that if non-Catholics are being sustained in their Christian life by such works as these they are receiving many advantages denied to their parents. These books will get them a long way in the search for union with God.