

of solitude *and nothing more*' (p. 134); on the contrary it is a cell of the Church, a supernatural family where the abbot holds a similar place to that of the bishop in the early Church. In it the monks' fervour is known by their patience and fraternal charity, by their obedience and sincere affection for the abbot who holds the place of Christ. Their preferring nothing to Christ is not only realized in solitary prayer but also by a practical recognition of him in the guests, in the poor, in the sick, in all the brethren, in the precepts of legitimate authority. All this is so fundamental that one wonders how the author could write: 'the monastery, *if it is a society*, is a society of solitaries'. (*ib.*) In fact the monastery is a City of God whose citizens seek him not in juxtaposition or isolation but with and in each other, known and loved in Christ.

These criticisms of this book must not blind the reader to its real value, yet the tendencies mentioned seem to prevent it from reaching the outstanding quality it might have attained. The absence of St Thomas' theology on the Religious State, the virtues and gifts, and Perfection and of the Benedictine examples of holiness may make the book fail in its purpose. Much of what P. Bouyer has said needed to be said; did not Ullathorne a century ago warn us that Benedictine life can easily become too comfortable? It would be a pity if readers neglected what is good in the book because of its less sound elements; these prevent one from recommending it to young religious—it is essentially a book for the well-trained and discerning reader which provides an interesting example of the advantages and disadvantages of the 'New Theology'.

HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

A NEW CREATION. TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. By August Brunner, S.J. Translated by Ruth Bethell. (Burns and Oates; 16s.)

This is evidently the work of a mind both deeply meditative and also concerned in a practical way with the direction of souls. The author is a Jesuit and the editor of the German Catholic weekly, *Stimmen der Zeit*. His aim has been to expound briefly the nature of Christian life in general, and then to show, again briefly but in a fundamental way, how this may flower into the three-fold religious ideal of poverty, chastity and obedience. He writes indeed for Catholics in general, but with a special regard to those who live under the three vows of religion. He writes too as a theologian with a turn for metaphysics and a discreet appreciation of contemporary existentialism and phenomenology. His manner is rather dryly rational, his style even and a bit monotonous. Most readers will find that a few pages at a time is as much as they can manage. Yet the book is well worth the effort it demands; it is not in

the least commonplace. Besides, it is excellently translated so far as I can judge; the thought has a distinctly German cast, but the idiom is pure English all through; and in some places beautifully easy and distinguished.

Fr Brunner's chief idea all through is that of our relation to God as Creator, a relation of which man before the Fall had 'first-hand experience' in his awareness 'of his own spirituality issuing from God as creative act', and of all things as 'utterly subordinated to the real meaning of existence'. When this special experience of God's paternal power was cancelled by the Fall man became 'possessed of the notion that he had to maintain his existence himself.' Hence an uncontrolled and radically futile self-seeking: 'he dare not relax his concern for a single instant for fear his existence should fall to pieces'. A stress on the futility rather than the wickedness of concupiscence seems characteristic of Fr Brunner's approach. What strikes him most in fallen man is *insecurity*; man has lost that confidence in existence which sprang from vivid consciousness of his dependence on almighty power and love. So the guiding concept of creation—that is, from man's side, of *being created*—leads to a powerful stress on the alternatives offered to mankind since Christ: either to rediscover 'what he truly is, a creature of God's creation', or madly to struggle for an impossible self-dependence and fulfilment. But God is not discovered except through 'unconditional acknowledgement' or surrender; which is a surrender also to love, since that is what God is (1 John iv, 1). Hence the place and role of Christ with his untainted humanity and perfect filial love of the Father; in union with whom we return to our Creator, and in no other way.

This way back to God is then sketched in terms of poverty, chastity and obedience. The three chapters on these virtues, though not free from platitudes and repetitions, contain many passages of very deep insight and lucidity. The final pages on obedience are especially commendable for their doctrinal sureness and their practical grasp of actual and concrete situations. The author's favourite idea of Christianity as discipleship (finely stated in the first chapter) is helpful here—'all religious obedience is . . . an extension of Christ's obedience to the Father, it means adopting the mind of Christ'—and is combined with a manly recognition of the way a subject may co-operate with the superior while remaining all the more truly obedient. The brief remarks on the sense in which religious obedience is and is not 'blind' may be strongly recommended. In general the three vows are related to Christ as our example, our lover and our lord respectively. As our example in poverty Christ brings us to a sense of God as Creator, for poverty should imply trust in God together with a certain imitation of his creative generosity and transcendence with respect to created things.

As our lover in chastity Christ teaches us the presence of God incarnate in our own nature. Finally as our lord and leader Christ teaches us, through obedience, that God is our *end*, leading us to the perfect acknowledgment, only complete in heaven, of God's will as our total cause and therefore (to echo Dante at this point) as our final peace.

Besides the touch of dryness and monotony, which not even the translator's skill altogether offsets, a fault may be found occasionally with the terms used in this book, particularly in a mutually exclusive use of 'natural' and 'personal' which leads to some puzzling statements. But these are slight blemishes in an honest and useful little treatise.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

I WANT TO SEE GOD. By P. Marie-Eugène, O.C.D. (Mercier Press; 21s.)

I AM A DAUGHTER OF THE CHURCH. By P. Marie-Eugène, O.C.D. (Mercier Press; 21s.)

In these two large volumes, together about 1,200 pages, Père Marie-Eugène offers a comprehensive synthesis of Carmelite spirituality, taking St Teresa's *Interior Castle* as his guide. He places her teaching on the solid, twofold theological foundation of the soul's creation in the image of God and the divine transcendence, and traces the spiritual life from its beginnings in the baptized person struggling with sin, to its ultimate consummation in the transforming union. Following the scheme of the *Interior Castle*, he discusses all the major questions of the spiritual life, such as spiritual reading, distractions, direction, spiritual friendship, silence, and also the controversial problem whether there is a general call to contemplation or not. He finds the solution in the distinction between a general and a proximate call: while unhesitatingly affirming that there is nothing, in principle, to prevent all men from reaching contemplative prayer, he considers that the proximate call is not for everyone, while yet extending it to the majority of Christians. Nevertheless, the fact remains that only few reach even the lower stages of contemplation, and very few, indeed, the higher ones. Following the teachers of Carmel, he ascribes this not to the lack of divine, but of human, generosity: only few Christians are ready to renounce themselves sufficiently to fulfil the conditions for contemplative prayer. For Père M.-Eugène follows the tradition not only of his Order but of the Church in stressing the absolute necessity of rigorous self-denial if the spiritual life is to flourish. He is also a faithful disciple of St John of the Cross in deprecating physical phenomena. The second volume contains, for example, a thorough examination of stigmatization in general and of the case of Therese Neumann in particular. He ends this section with the following admirably balanced statement: 'Whatever be the case, we must note that while everything is clear, limpid, marvellously human while highly divine in Saint Teresa and Saint Catherine, around