

ously and respectfully.

Part III is set out in the form of a number of brief theses. It is to be hoped that Dr Hengel will expand them into a book. He is aware of danger on two sides, On the one hand there are those who acclaim "the historical-critical method" (as if there were only one!) and suppose that this is the only treatment the New Testament calls for. On the other hand there are those, both radical critics who think that there is no history in the New Testament and conservatives who will not even discuss questions of historicity, who are interested in

nothing but "theological interpretation". Against both, Dr Hengel says "Theological exegesis', which thinks that it can 'interpret' the New Testament without the application of the relevant historical methods, is not only deaf to the question of truth but is also in danger of distorting what the texts say and falling victim to docetic speculation" (p 134f). With this, and with practically everything else in Part III, I agree heartily.

No one, I think, is likely to read this book quickly; the time taken in reading it slowly is well spent.

C. K. BARRETT

CATHERINE OF GENOA: PURGATION AND PURGATORY AND THE SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE trans and ed by S. Hughes with an introduction by B. J. Groeschel (*The Classics of Western Spirituality*). SPCK 1979 pp xvi + 163 £4.80.

Although she died in 1510 and did not write any books, we can get unbearably close to St Catherine's tormented life. Her mysticism emerges from immense natural and spiritual tensions and dislocations, all somehow held together in God as her being was dismantled and purified, detaching her from whatever fulfilment she might reasonably have expected. An aristocratic woman trapped in an unhappy marriage, even the conversion of her dissolute husband and the subsequent self-sacrifice of their care for the sick and wretched of Genoa brought no easy resolution.

The *Spiritual Dialogue* is in three parts, compiled by more than one person and it is an uneven blend of dialogue, meditation and narrative. In a curious way, the defective literary structure conveys something of the fragmented human experience involved here. The multiplicity of intentions and styles, as well as the dialogue-form expressing the various facets of St Catherine at odds with one another ('soul', 'body', 'human frailty' etc.), vividly render her struggle for Christian wholeness without imposing a false or premature coherence. Dennis Potter once remarked that despair made elegant cannot shake the mind with the brute force of the orig-

inal scream. With St Catherine, both Body and Soul waited to see the workings of God, which increased their joy and suffering. Fittingly it is St Catherine, or rather the work drawing on her and entitled *Purgation and Purgatory*, that offers what is easily among the best accounts of Purgatory, that troubled moment of purifying love in the soul's journey to God. Only those familiar with the other expositions of the doctrine can fully appreciate, by way of contrast often, the merits, beauty and dignity of her insights into the bitter-sweet reality of purification after death, whereby God's forgiving love integrates a penitent's disjointed life.

The translator has done well, except that he frequently omits or telescopes phrases. The introduction will not replace the classic studies by von Hugel and Umile Bonzi, either in terms of scholarship or of sympathetic penetration, and they are at their weakest when explaining St Catherine's teaching on Purgatory or locating it in tradition. But then for such a task, contemporary Christian culture provides few resources and little incentive.

ROBERT OMBRES O.P.

SONS OF THE PROPHETS: EVANGELICAL LEADERS OF THE VICTORIAN CHURCH by Michael Hennell SPCK, 1979, pp 147, £7.50.

Mr Hennell's book deals with six of the more or less 'liberal' (in theological out-

look) leaders of Anglican Evangelicism in the generation after Simeon and Wilber-