

of itself elicits habits of metaphysical abstraction and brings them into full consciousness. Mathematical habits of an elementary kind can in rare cases be acquired spontaneously. But the habits of the modern mathematical physicist which he needs to have explained to himself by one who understands them at first hand are far from elementary. The thomist who is to help him adequately must himself cultivate them as a special discipline. The difficulty here will be to balance the two habits of metaphysical and mathematical abstraction, and keep both vigorously alive. Each tends so to monopolise the mind as to exclude the other. Until there are minds equally versatile in both the rupture between physics and philosophy will persist.

## REVIEWS

THE WORD. By Adrienne von Speyer. (Collins; 10s. 6d.)

Adrienne von Speyer is a new writer to English readers, and this, one of the first of her books to be translated, is more remarkable than the layout or the chapter headings suggests. The twelve chapters might be inadequately described as progressive commentary on the first eighteen verses of St John's Gospel; but this is only the framework for a piece of remarkably penetrating illumination (there is no other word for it) of divine truth. Of course there is the apparatus of learning and sensibility. If this book had been written to impress a body of learned men it would have been crammed with footnotes and references. As it is, the learning, experience and sensibility are merged in and subject to the work itself which is 'to bear witness to the light', and the writing appears deceptively facile. It is neither facile nor superficial. As we read through the book we are borne deeper and deeper into the heart of the mystery of God; and the deeper we penetrate the nature of God the more fully do we grasp the meaning of human life. It is commonplace to demand that the Christian view of life should be God-centred; this book not only offers a logical argument to prove that, but by its 'illuminative' power makes the reader see and feel that truth. In other words, here is a piece of truly creative writing, an epithet we bestow with alarming prodigality on all kinds of work. Creative art is that which comes from genuine human experience engaging the mind and the passions and by its own self-sacrificing purity is capable of recreating that experience in the reader. This is creative writing about God: a very rare thing; the love of man that it generates is even rarer. It can hardly be rash to predict great popularity for Adrienne von Speyer's writings because she not only explains

the answer to human problems; she gives strength, courage, wisdom and many other qualities to face them. She has been very honourably served by her translator, Alexander Dru.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA. By Marcelle Auclair. (Burns Oates; 30s.)

ST TERESA OF JESUS. By E. Allison Peers. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

Yet another life of St Teresa makes the reader wonder whether anything new can be said. In many ways, that published in 1882 'par une Carmélite de Caen' has not been surpassed, and, after all, no one can tell us much more than is in the writings of the saint herself. The value of each successive life must depend on the interest of the point of view of the biographer and on the soundness of the criteria by which the incidents and the aspects of the saint's character are selected. Mme Auclair gives us a biography distinctly feminine, perhaps French and certainly modern. On all these three counts, her work fulfils the requirements of interest and soundness. One scrutinises jealously to see whether any vital aspects are omitted: no, unco' guid Sister Alberta receives her snub (and with her all the would-be mystics of our own day), and there is no nonsense about rationalisation, in fact, we are given a new wonder (p. 365), gathered by Mme Auclair from the oral tradition of one of the Spanish convents. For good measure, it concerns a miraculous image; there is much to be said for diminishing the sometimes morbid contemporary stress on 'mysticism' with a nice barrage of miraculous images that only simple faith can get through. All the same, a little more rationalisation might have been acceptable: we are still given the escape of St John from the house of the Calced in Toledo with all the apparatus of the preternatural light, voice and miraculous lifting over a wall (p. 341), although the late Padre Crisógono's *Vida* (published with the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos edition of the works of the saint) cleared away all this hagiographical fantasy in 1950 (and gave us instead first-class evidence for St John's very high I.Q.), unfortunately not in time for Mme Auclair's biography (originally published in the same year) to incorporate it. Nevertheless, it is a book of great charm and interest, and well worth adding to the long list of twentieth-century works on St Teresa. The photographs are of startling originality and beauty.

*St Teresa of Jesus* is the first of the late Professor Peers' posthumous writings to be published. It contains nine pieces (new or reprinted) on Spanish mysticism (three on St Teresa, two on St John); one is a study of the style of St Teresa; another, with great skill, presents the English reader with a survey of recent Spanish research on St John (and includes an account of Padre Crisógono's work on the life mentioned above). The author again takes up the question of the alleged mysticism of Luis de