

comment on these epistles as not Pauline, and not to comment on Hebrews; and I suspect it is not merely a matter of logic, but of theology, which makes these writings unpalatable. Dr Heathcote is no Catholic; he has scant regard for any tradition, he is minimal in his interpretation of Christological, and particularly ecclesiological texts, somewhat crude in his interpretation of justification. This is apparent in his brief outlines of the content of the various epistles; when many hope for a revision of the Canon Law concerning the pre-ensorship of books it becomes the duty of a reviewer to point out the sectarian bias of Christian books.

There is no mention that the canonical epistles and the Acts are inspired; a few quotations will illustrate the bias of the comments (p. 31 on I Thess. 4. 15). 'Such instruction would be accepted as revealed by the Spirit of Christ, but it would not be a word spoken by Jesus Himself while on earth, and so for us, at least, it would not have the full authority of Christ behind it.' (p. 68 on I Cor. 11. 1-16) 'The word "is" in the phrase "This is my body" most probably stood for "means"; this bread means my body . . . The Corinthians must discern the depth of meaning in this simple act.' (p. 78 on 2 Cor. 13. 13) This benediction 'is one of only two passages in the Bible which unites in a single sentence God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. The other is Mt. 28. 19'. (p. 93). 'There is general agreement that in meaning it ("bishop" or "overseer") is the same as the term "elder".' (p. 118 on Gal. 5. 13, 14) 'The Christian will naturally keep many of the moral commands of the Law, but he will do so through the aid of the Spirit and because he is a Christian and not in order to gain merit with God.' The comment on Col. 1. (p. 133) is minimal concerning the divinity of Christ; (p. 150 on Rom. 6. 1-11) baptism 'is a moral, not a magical transformation'.

This book is thus unfitted for presentation to sixth forms or to training college students without qualification; on the other hand the light it throws on the overall Protestant theological mentality can help to foster a greater appreciation of the problems facing ecumenical approaches: students might well benefit by giving it a critical work-over. It is well indexed and has a bibliography which is, I think, entirely Protestant.

DAVID COLLIER

SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF SISTER ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY, edited by M. M. Philipon, O.P.; Geoffrey Chapman, 21s.

To find a new spiritual writer, one who is neither cloying, sentimental nor embarrassing, and whose words perfectly reflect the writer's spiritual life—this is a rare experience. I myself have had it with Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity. I first came across her writings in one of Thomas Merton's books, and so the selection and publication of her most important ideas and prayers is a happy event for me.

Sister Elizabeth died in 1906 at the early age of 26. It was a Dominican who

first encouraged her great love of the Blessed Trinity, a love which was to become the heart of her spiritual teaching and message. In 1901, she entered the Carmel at Dijon, and from her earliest days there, she found a profound and lasting happiness. She discovered a 'deep and calm' love of God and seems always to have been a natural contemplative and lover of solitude. Her one desire was to lose herself completely and to become 'a praise of glory' for God.

Much in Sister Elizabeth's life is orthodox, traditional, and even unremarkable. Her stress on the necessity of suffering, her constant recourse to scripture, her emphasis on the love of God, and her submission to the Divine Will—these are things we find in the lives and works of all the best spiritual writers. What, then, is original and unique about her? First, I think, is the fact that, though she died early in this century, she is very much of our own time (her cause was introduced in Rome in 1961). Her many letters show how well she understood the problems of people living in the world today, and how deeply she herself could enter into their lives. Again, Sister Elizabeth had to a strong degree the ability to examine her own motives, that tendency which has become rather typical of this century. Thus, she admits that 'sensitiveness' was her dominant characteristic when she entered Carmel.

But perhaps what attracts one to Sister Elizabeth more than anything else is the almost complete absence of pious phraseology or platitudes in her thought and writing. Her words are simple, fresh, evocative, sincere, and fervent in the best sense. Her *Prayer to the Trinity* is probably the finest thing she ever wrote. In it, she declares, 'O Eternal Word, Expression of my God, may I spend my life in listening to Thee; may I become completely docile that I may learn everything from Thee; then through all the nights and voids, in all my times of helplessness, may I ever cling to Thee and dwell in Thy great light. O my Beloved Star, so enchant me that I can never turn from Thy radiance'.

There can be little doubt that Sister Elizabeth was a mystic. Her writings, however, are not rigorous collections of categories or drill-books of devotion; they are suffused with love and intelligence. Like all true mystics, Sister Elizabeth knew that it is better to be silent than to be vague. Yet when she *can* speak of her experiences, her words have an extraordinary intensity and power—'To ensure that nothing may withdraw me from this beautiful interior silence, I must practise always the same equanimity, the same isolation, the same separation, the same detachment'.

Sister Elizabeth's detachment was rooted in love; it did not separate her either from the beauty of the natural world or from the love of her neighbour. On the contrary, she lived out fully that paradox of the enclosed, contemplative life—the losing of one's life to find it more abundantly. Sister Elizabeth will surely have a great influence not only on the lives and prayer of men and women today, but also on the future writing of all devotional literature.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS