

ing. Dr Knowles is a fervent medievalist because he is first a fervent humanist—a humanist in both senses of the term, as connoting both a special, intense literary culture and a special, intense reverence for man. Humanism in both these senses may occasion certain oversights or exaggerations, and such might be found lurking even here by a zealously critical eye. But it would take some time to seek them out, and the seeker would certainly appear ungrateful.

In contrast to Dr Knowles, Professor Weiss is quite inellegant. There is nothing in his lecture except learning—no grace, no wit, no 'form'; only a mass of specialised knowledge about the pre-petrarchan Italian humanists. This term is here taken chiefly in its first or literary sense—a sense so narrow as to exclude Dante. Of course Professor Weiss is right: a new classicism did appear at the turn of the century and its contribution to our culture is very considerable. Only let us not over-estimate it. Dante, after all, had in practice already settled the issue as between Latin and the vernacular; and the wonder is that after the Divine Comedy Italians should still want to write verse in Latin. But if the ancient tongue still exercised a mighty charm it did so only because there were scholars eager to spend their lives on the study of it. It is with the circumstances and first effects of this renewed love of the classics that Professor Weiss very learnedly deals.

K. F.

CATHERINE SAINT OF SIENA. By Michael de la Bedoyere. (Hollis & Carter; 12s. 6d.)

'Apart from making a fascinating story in her own right as a woman and apart from her important place in the story of a curious age Catherine of Siena happened to be a saint. . . . It is extremely interesting for us in this materialistic age to consider how so rare a distinction as fanatical sanctity can inspire a woman to achieve universally acknowledged greatness.' The book therefore sets out to consider this. Catherine began with prayer. 'God, she meditated in her "cell of self-knowledge" is he who *is*. The creature therefore must be he who *is not*. From this basic argument the rest springs'. But 'these arguments are not likely greatly to appeal to our generation, which has largely lost not only its belief in the Redemption but even its belief in God as *he who is*'. So Catherine is 'a puzzling saint'. And her contemporary biographers are no less puzzling. 'These at best were men who looked to the normal and accepted tradition of Christian sanctity. . . . No doubt this accounts for the colourful description of Catherine's penances, visions, ecstasies and high mystical experiences, but it is surprising that they were not more troubled by her lack of status, her disregard of any superior, the quantity of criticism she evoked, her extreme self-assertion. . . . Clearly a brave attempt is made to bluff through these difficulties. . . . The only satisfactory answer is surely that they *knew* her and that in spite of their prejudices and conservatism they recog-

nised the spark of sanctity, i.e. of genius in the things of God'. Therefore though she 'was for the most part a practical failure' she remains a valuable saint for us insofar as we can 'learn from her to widen our traditional conception of what it means to be a saint'. She also remains the 'permanent critic' of the "'playing safe" attitude'. So the epilogue of the book finally underlines what has been illustrated throughout, that Catherine never limited her endeavour to realise her ideals 'just because popes are popes and princes are princes and cardinals are cardinals'. Why should she?

No doubt her 'genius in the things of God' is 'the only satisfactory answer' (if any answer is needed but we should like to know a little more about what this means. There are other things we should like to know. What is the normal and accepted tradition of Christian sanctity? Why do estimates of a saint's 'value' to later generations prove distasteful? Do Catherine's mystical experiences bear any relation or hold the key to her political activity? (Perhaps the contemporary biographers thought they did.) What was the nature of the self-realisation which gave her the courage to speak out? (She described herself as 'she who is not'.) Must her activities be judged in the light of medieval political theories or of twentieth century ones only? Have these important things been obscured by an obsession with the iniquities of princes and prejudices of biographers, or does raciness of style sometimes introduce false emotional emphases and conceal both the presence and the absence of logical thought?

It is a book which leaves one thinking, but the dust cover and illustrations are a credit to the publishers.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

HENRI BERGSON AND THE FAITH. By John M. Oesterreicher. (Reprinted from *Thought*, Fordham University.)

It would scarcely be just, if it were possible, to review critically this one chapter of a book still to appear. We may, however, gladly recognise the promise it contains of a painstaking attempt to do justice to Bergson's attitude to religion: if there is no evasion of statements which appear to be in flagrant contradiction with Christian teaching, there is also a refusal to accept a facile interpretation of others which might bring us nearer to the true mind of a very great philosopher.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE WORLD. By James Burnham. (Jonathan Cape; 10s. 6d.)

Mr Burnham attracted attention on both sides of the Atlantic with his book *The Managerial Revolution*. His new book, *The Struggle for the World* is of importance for two reasons. The first is that it has been widely read in the United States and it undoubtedly represents a very powerful trend of thought in contemporary America. Whether we agree with its thesis or no, the fact is that it is widely