

secular institute which is at the heart of the more widespread Grail movement. Like so many of the Grail publications, it is attractively produced, beautifully illustrated, and written in an idiom which is modern and popular without loss of dignity.

A.G.

MOSES AND THE VOCATION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. By André Neher.

Translated by Irene Marinoff. (Longmans, Green and Co.; 6s.)

From this skilfully written and well illustrated book emerges a vivid picture, not of Moses, but of a particular form of Judaism. It is in this Judaism that Moses is represented—this is the intention of the author. Here however is a Judaism which will appear to the Christian very much as a stranger. Gone is the messianic hope: gone is the dynamic impulse of the prophets. There is no one looking for 'him who is to come'; no one even asking 'or look we for another?' All this is dead, and only the law in all its starkness and isolation is left. Here it is that is seen the full relation between God and man. The covenant made by God once and for all time is formally crystallized in the law.

André Neher seeks to find a living relationship with Moses—a relationship 'which allows the instantaneous diffusion of the "numinous" to penetrate into the most intimate depths of the heart' (p. 33). This is to be found in Israel's keeping-faith with Moses, keeping-faith with the law of which he is God's instrument. The consequences of this attitude are inevitable: they are, in fact, one might add, crippling. The completeness and once-and-for-all nature of the law precludes the possibility of organic growth. The history of Israel cannot be seen as the preparation, growth and formation of the *Ecclesia Dei*; it is simply the history of keeping-faith. The pentateuch is not seen as the organic development, within the school of Moses, of the cultic relationship with God; it is but a static whole, coming entirely from the very pen of Moses. 'The dialogue [between God and Moses] continues until that last day when, before his death, Moses can entrust the whole law, faithfully transcribed into the book and already provided with a lengthy commentary by himself, to the keeping of his people. . . . The imperative has appeared; it is inscribed in the stone tablets of the decalogue . . . it is also inscribed in the *torah*, which Moses hands to Israel in the serene conviction of having thereby given to man the key to every human vocation.' (p. 95.)

The place of 'scholarship' is confined to the attempt to fit together the history of the Israelites, taken at face value in the pentateuch, and the fruits of historical and archaeological research. It is done with skill, but under the *a priori* assumptions which we have just mentioned. Here, in fact, scantily veiled—we might better say, tinted—with the

language of modern psychology, philosophy and historical research, is an ultimate and inevitable fundamentalism.

The representation given here of Moses and the vocation of the Jewish people is not likely to be directly helpful to the Christian. But this book does give a clear insight into the mind of modern Judaism which is extremely valuable.

G.H.

MY LAST RETREAT. By Edward Leen, C.S.SP. (Mercier Press; 15s.)

These conferences for an eight-day retreat have the precision of a man's last instructions for the furtherance of his life's work. It is not the deadly precision of the crack shot but the creative quality of a visionary thinking in terms of eternal life with the concise mental concepts of a draughtsman. If the style seems at times *staccato* and the pace over-intense, it must be remembered that these are retreat conferences, a transcript of the spoken word. The tones of voice, the gestures, the facial expressions by which a retreat master indicates delicate nuances of feeling, smooths away severity or enlivens a remark with humour are missing. If Dr Leen had revised the work the result might have had more literary grace but could not have had more force. Each point is straight on the target. If it stings it is only to wake us to the realization that the grace of God is sufficient for us. If it draws blood it is to draw our attention to the blood that was shed for us.

Certain statements concerning the 'Protestant attitude' might be considered sweeping by a convert, while the injunction to be lady-like strikes an outmoded note at a time when every woman is called a lady, be she baroness or baggage. The conferences on the sacrament of penance are very helpful, but the information that confessors to nuns find their work laborious is no new discovery. The holy labourers on the other side of the confessional might be surprised to find how many nuns are inhibited in their desire to 'open out' by the atmosphere that comes through the screen. But these are very minor and personal objections and far outweighed by the inspired vigour of every conference.

Throughout the series there is a sense of urgency which startles the reader to a new receptivity. Although it was preached to a congregation engaged in missionary work, much of *My Last Retreat* will be of value to contemplative nuns. To these latter, whose spiritual horizons may become dimmed by that total lack of obvious result for obvious effort which is apt to undermine the roots of faith, this book will be invigorating. For all religious it will give a fresh outlook, perhaps a new sense of values and a deeper realization of the meaning and significance of the religious life.

P.C.C.