

when he says that dramatic verse 'compels primary attention to the mind speaking rather than to the language being spoken'. Between these two definitions he demonstrates Yeats's concern with drama as ritual, Auden's use of the poetic play as a vehicle for ideas, the essential frivolity of Christopher Fry, and the various attempts at verse drama made by Cummings, Stevens, Pound, Eberhart and MacLeish. The centre of his book, however, is an extraordinarily eloquent and persuasive study of the development of Eliot's plays. Professor Donoghue sees each play as an advance both in the technique of verse for the theatre and also in the presentation of the interplay of one character with another. He praises Eliot for his increasing power to steep his ideas in personality and situation, for achieving in *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman* a poetic drama that is intensely human, that speaks to and for our own time.

Engaging and learned as Professor Donoghue's main thesis appears, it is, I think, wrong-headed. *The Family Reunion* has an ominous power which he too easily disclaims, while *The Cocktail Party* does not present 'the life of the common routine and the way of beatitude as totally discrete'. The latter play, surely, is an illustration of the Christian conception of 'divers gifts'. By rightly applauding the transparency and ease of the verse in the late plays and by perceiving a new warmth in Eliot's handling of character, Professor Donoghue ignores the fact that these plays have a very limp hold on the imagination. 'The disconsolate chimera' has been banished, yes, but what has taken its place is something too nebulous, too abstract to be experienced fully either on the page or in the theatre. The clue to all the plays is, as Professor Donoghue himself points out, the fact that they 'strive toward the condition of prayer'. If he had followed this idea through and seen the *mystical* element as the one important thing all the plays have in common, though in varying degrees, he would, I believe, have resisted the temptation to read into the last two plays a dramatic, human content which is acceptable on several levels. Eliot's vision is always a transcendent one and *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman* fail because they attempt to draw down that vision and imprison it in a secular context which it does not really fit. Thus these two plays are failures, it seems to me, both on the dramatic and the spiritual level. On the other hand, *The Family Reunion* is a success because it is content neither to be too explicit nor to make too many concessions.

It is a proof of Professor Donoghue's stimulating criticism and lively style that he arouses such disagreement. His learning is exuberant, his reading entirely assimilated and judiciously applied. *The Third Voice* is an invaluable contribution to a section of modern literature that too easily makes room for the spurious and the portentous.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

## NOTICES

FONTANA BOOKS have published two new titles, *MIRACLES* by C. S. Lewis and *MORALS AND MAN* by Gerald Vann, O.P. (each 2s. 6d.), which should

earn many more readers for two of the most distinguished Christian apologetes of our time. Father Vann's book, originally published as *Morals Makyth Man* in 1937, has been revised for this new edition.

THE LETTERS OF ALEXANDER POPE, selected with an introduction by John Butt, have just been added to the World's Classics series (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.) They reveal an attractive side of the poet, whose human qualities have too often been eclipsed by the brilliance of his satire.

GROWTH IN HOLINESS, by Father Faber, now appears in the Orchard series (Burns and Oates, 18s.) with a preface by Ronald Chapman which vividly answers the question: 'What was this man, preaching his embarrassing message of love, couched in a Baroque idiom, doing in the world of Dickens, of steam engines and progress?'

THE LIFE OF PRAYER, by Baron Friedrich von Hugel (Dent 5s.), is a re-print of two addresses on truths vitally necessary to the life of prayer, the first regarding God, the second the soul, both displaying the learning, humility and wisdom of the writer.

UNDERSTANDING THE PARABLES, by Francis L. Filas, S.J. (Burns and Oates, 21s.), is a simple exposition of the traditional interpretation of the parables of our Lord, which may be helpful to those reading them for the first time. It has a short introduction by Father Martindale.

PETER CLAVER, by Angel Valtierra, S.J. (Burns and Oates, 30s.), is an excellent life of the saint who spent his life caring for the slaves imported into South America. It brings out clearly the heroic penances without the usual pious reflections of the hagiographer, balancing this with a most interesting account of his methods, based on a critical study of the original documents.

LIFE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, by J. J. Bagley (Batsford, 21s.), is a commentary on castle and abbey, theologians and craftsmen, illuminated, as one has come to expect of any Batsford book, with intelligently chosen, and admirably reproduced, illustrations. Windy generalizations are avoided, and this concrete re-creation of what medieval life must have been like in daily detail is both informed and interesting.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ITALIAN LITERATURE, by J. H. Whitfield (Pelican Books, 3s. 6d.), is a witty and penetrating survey by the leading English 'Italianist'. Professor Whitfield is a moralist as well as a fine scholar, and if his fervour is always engaging his opinions are often disputable. But no one interested in Italy should miss this book.

IN ETTERNO SPIRO (Manchester University Press, 7s. 6d.) Sheila Ralphs provides a good 'study in the nature of Dante's Paradise': a difficult subject but one which the author is uncommonly well qualified to write about. She is scholarly, serious, and sensitive to religious values—and also charmingly modest. There is no better short introduction, in English, to the least known but loveliest part of the *Divine Comedy*.