

an unjust world, and that at last the time is at hand for Israel to be instrumental in bringing material peace and prosperity to mankind. Some, more spiritually minded, believe that the new state will actually lead the nations to 'know' the God of Israel, as scripture foretold. And yet, even while these earnest aspirations are being raised, temple and priests remain as far as ever from reinstatement at the centre of Judaism; their detailed ordinances would in any case be almost impossible to observe in the modern world.

For Christians, the 'mystery of Israel' is the mystery of the salvation of the Israelites. Will the people originally chosen by God to receive his self-revelation, who rejected his long-awaited Messiah and who have suffered so much—will they one day return to the Church? In short, the author argues from the New Testament that the coming of the Messiah divided Israel into two parts: one comprised those who recognised him and accepted his teaching, and the other, the majority of the Jewish people, who rejected him. Therefore it is false to say that all Israel rejected the Messiah. All the first members of the Church were Jewish. Certainly, the nature of God's people was transformed on Calvary, as each Christian is transformed by baptism. But they are at once the Israel of the Old Testament and the new Israel: always they are the 'true Israel'. On this view, it is misleading to lay stress on Israel's infidelity, while losing sight of the Jewish origins of the early Church. It is untrue to say that a Church of the Gentiles has replaced Israel. 'Spiritually we are Semites'. From this point, the author argues convincingly that St Paul, in Rom. II, was not predicting the wholesale conversion of all Jewry into the Church, any more than he expected all pagans to be saved. What he meant, positively, was that the *fullness of those predestined* would be saved from both groups. Such understanding as we have of the mercy of God gives us hope that one day a large proportion of the Jewish people will return to the Church; but this is far from certain. The mystery of Israel's final destiny remains.

ROBERT SHARP, O.P.

SECULAR INSTITUTES, by J. M. Perrin O.P.; translated by Roger Capel; Geoffrey Chapman, 10s. 6d.

At a time when we are all becoming more aware of the vital role of the laity in the Church, this book of Fr Perrin's on secular institutes has a most important contribution to make, for here he sets before us the full flowering of the Christian lay life. His book is all the more welcome as there is as yet in this country but a tiny trickle of literature on the subject. It is now fourteen years since the Apostolic Constituion *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (1947) declared this new way of consecration to God in the world to be a 'state of perfection'. Yet how few among the clergy, religious or laity are aware of this 'truly providential' growth in the life of the Church. Though designed principally for those already interested in secular institutes, it should be read by all who have at

heart the pursuit of Christian perfection. Priests especially, I think, who have to direct and encourage vocations ought to study here the essence of the secular institute vocation.

The sub-title of the book, 'Consecration to God and life in the world', lands us at once face to face with the apparent paradox inherent in the secular institute vocation. It is unfortunate that we miss the force of the original *présence au monde*, which suggests so much more than 'life in the world'. As Fr Gabriel Reidy O.F.M. points out, in his informative and understanding introduction, it is an untranslatable term, one which in French conveys 'the enduring relevance of Christian values and procedures in a world that is so often and so temptingly described as post-Christian'.

It is this divinizing of the human, this integrating of all elements of daily life into a whole supernatural life, that is the *leit-motif* of the contemporary song of the Church. Has there not been too much emphasis on the 'spiritual life', leading to a departmentalization of our day-to-day living? Thus we have come to think that 'perfection' must entail a withdrawing from the world—as though holiness could not be found in the conditions in which God has placed us. Secular institutes prove that there is really no paradox in consecration to God and life in the world.

Fr Perrin, explaining the living of this apparent paradox, deals with the theological grounds for this vocation. He calls his work 'an attentive meditation on the words of the Church and a loving effort to assimilate their thought'. The words are those of *Provida Mater Ecclesia* and *Primo Feliciter*, the full texts of which are appended to his study. He is anxious that all should understand the 'radical originality of this vocation, which without this understanding would be obscured and weighed down by methods unsuitable for its purpose', for we must not 'put new wine into old bottles'.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I deals with the Church's attitude towards secular institutes and their special role in the mystical body. Part II is devoted to the state of perfection in the world. The word 'perfection', he says, 'should be a summons to the most wonderful adventure, to a journey of the greatest discovery'. Difficulties in the quest for God are frankly pointed out but the emphasis is on the dynamic force of love and generosity. The apostolate is shown to be not only an expression of holiness but a means of achieving it, and this must be done 'not so much by words as by the whole of one's being'. Members of secular institutes must be 'living acts of charity', rather than people who do acts of charity. Bound interiorly to God by the evangelical counsels they are free for all humanity.

Part III answers the questions posed, 'How can dedicated persons, alone in the world, torn in different directions, train themselves, stand fast, and make progress?' Fr Perrin stresses the two-fold obligation of the individual member to personal fidelity and awareness, and of the Institute to clear discernment of vocations, serious formation, and a flexible and stable rule of life.

The appeal made to priests by Fr Perrin echoes that of Pope Pius XII who

commended to them 'the generous encouragement of these holy vocations', calling on them to lend assistance not only to the religious orders and societies but also to these truly providential secular institutes', and Fr Perrin reminds the priest that he must understand the form and requirements of this vocation so that he will not make of them (secular institutes) what *he* would like, but receive them from the hand of God. Secular institutes need encouragement, not for their achievement, but for the rich promise they give of future harvest.

Fr Perrin is served better than he has previously been by his new translator, Roger Capel. One word I query—*conscience* which in French can mean 'awareness' or 'conscience'. On page 85, it would seem more intelligible to say 'at the level of consciousness' rather than 'of conscience'. The prose is on the whole concise, though at times it is lumbering and not crystal clear. The book is well printed and attractively produced.

It is to be hoped that the author's wish will be fulfilled—that the thought of the Church in all the simplicity of its truth will 'clear away the prejudices which prevent the secular institutes being seen in their true light'.

TERESA MELIA

RETREAT IN SLOW MOTION, by Ronald Knox; Sheed and Ward, 16s.

It is sometimes difficult for people to realise that Mgr Knox was faced with the same problems in trying to preach as the ordinary priest in the pulpit. The simplicity of his examples, the carefree humour of their extension, and the resolution of the argument all pass with such ease that we miss the effort which went into the construction of style and the analysis of a problem which lies behind each sermon. This collection of sermons preached to children in retreat are, like the children, of different ages. One can detect the development of Knox's art; from the rather artificial, somewhat prosy earlier sermons to the quick direct perfection of his later style. How can we measure his art? One looks around at recent developments in communication, the modern novel for instance, and these sermons seem dated, somehow concerned with a world these children are not going to enter. But, on the other hand, on the basis of our sermon tradition, we can confidently inform our readers that they are the best sermons that they are likely to read or hear for a long time.

This is one reason why it is so important that somebody should make a detailed study of Knox's sermons, now that they are all available. We desperately need some starting point for a tradition of sermon criticism. Knox would be the ideal starting point because he raises so many questions. One is amazed by the power of his communication. He shines through these sermons as a person—so much of Evelyn Waugh's biography springs to mind—his spiritual struggles, his anxieties, his remarkable courage: all this comes through in the best of these sermons with a strange tenderness. One is constantly made aware of the presence of a sound penetrating common sense in the spiritual life, and