

A HANDBOOK TO THE LIFE & TIMES OF ST TERESA & ST JOHN OF THE CROSS. By E. Allison Peers. (Burns Oates; 21s.)

Readers of the life and works of the two great Spanish mystics are often left in a whirl of personalities and places, leaving them uncertain of the total picture. Events happened so rapidly and St Teresa wrote and rode with such vigour and speed that it is difficult to keep up with her. Professor Allison Peers before his death had produced this *Handbook* (which was in the press when he died) to assist the reader and student to form a total picture of the history of the Carmelite Reform under the two saints and he succeeded, as he alone could be expected to succeed, in such a work of synthesis and indexing. The first part of the work gives a conspectus of the whole history from the birth of the Saint Teresa till some years after the death of both saints when the Reform was finally established. This is followed by short biographical notes on all the personalities referred to in the life and works of the two mystics. And finally there are lists and descriptions of the convents and priories of the Reform as well as all the places connected therewith and a chronological outline in parallel columns of the lives of St Teresa and St John and of events in the Carmelite Order. The *Handbook* forms a perfect appendix to the eight volumes of the English version of the works of these two saints, for which among all his other writings Professor Peers will be best known and most to be thanked. It was fitting that this summary should have been his last work and it will prove to be an essential addition to those eight volumes on the shelves of every student of mystical theology and of Spanish history.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE NEW TOWER OF BABEL. By Dietrich von Hildebrand. (P. J. Kenedy and Sons; \$3.00).

In this book, which confronts a number of contemporary intellectual and practical 'heresies', Professor von Hildebrand's approach is deep rather than acute. There is no sharp-shooting of opponents. Rather, he proceeds at a reflective and contemplative pace, calmly casting the light of the *philosophia perennis*—his debt to St Augustine is particularly in evidence—on our modern situation. The result is all the more effective. Indeed, it is both refreshing and impressive to see the contemplative themes of truth, love, and reverence, all set to the key of that *religio* which is the response proper to man's fundamental status of creaturehood, acting as a solvent on all the empiricisms, relativisms, and efficiency-cults which, consciously or unconsciously, function as

temptations to the christian conscience in our time. Not the least value of this book, for instance, at a time when many christians are tempted to express the eternal christian challenge to the world in existentialist terms, is how it shows up the Sartrean doctrine of choice for the fundamentally mean and tawdry thing it really is.

Written primarily for philosophers, this book does not at first sight have the usual appearance of 'spiritual reading'. Yet it is precisely as such that it may confidently be recommended to all at least who read modern books and listen to wireless talks. There can be no truly contemplative life without *ascesis*. And if theology be the proper mental nourishment of christian contemplation, this book shows how philosophy, acting as the handmaid of theology, may very effectively work a purification of the christian mind from the seductions of contemporary thought and thus render the whole man more prompt and single-minded in his response to the saving truths of the Faith.

R.T.

LIVING THE CREED. By Carroll E. Simcox. (Dacre Press; 10s. 6d.)

THE TRIPTYCH OF THE KINGDOM. By N. G. M. Van Doornik, Rev. S. Jelsma, and Rev. A. van de Lisdonk. (Sands; 15s.)

These two books have one attribute in common: they affirm that a christian believes in a Person before a code; Christ is prior to the Creed. After that they differ widely. Dr Simcox, an Episcopal pastor in New England, writes a very lively and practical exposition of the Creed to illustrate his belief that we may know it as we know a house, from the outside and from the inside. The best knowledge comes from living inside where we get to know Christ as a person. However, Dr Simcox is eager to offend no one, and when he comes to a disputed point of dogma he seeks, and admits it, to evade the issue. To defend the evasion he uses his house simile: 'We are trying in this book to take as much for granted as possible the outside of the house, the dogmas, while we explore the treasure within'. So he regrets that 'we Christians have done our best, or our worst, to defile it [the dogma of the virgin birth] with ugly controversy'. But if dogmas really are the walls of our house and we neglect to point them, the house will fall down. A responsible householder will inspect the fabric of his building and if he is wise he will consult an architect from time to time. Moreover, Christ has left us an architect to maintain the Church's house: 'Thou art Peter . . . he who heareth you heareth me'. To base the christian life on the Creed