

conforming magistrates and local officials of his diocese is most interestingly illuminated by the two extracts from Davies' funeral sermon on Essex (pages 57 and 58).

'(They) walk after the pleasures and riches of this life, apply all their power to further and continue the kingdom of Anti-Christ, defend papistry, superstition and idolatry, pilgrimages to wells and blind chapels, procure the wardens of churches in time of visitation to perjury to conceal images, rood-lofts and altars. . . . God's chosen officers in this blessed time of light and knowledge of the Gospel of Christ will neither enter themselves into the Kingdom of Heaven nor suffer them that would.'

Both extracts deserve, perhaps, a wider comment and analysis by the author.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA. By Sigrid Undset. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

The temptation to write almost in terms of fiction when dealing with any very strongly characterized figure over whom history and legend have woven an enclosing veil was not quite resisted by the great Scandinavian novelist, Sigrid Undset, when she compiled her biography of St Catherine of Siena.

The effect of her work is less dislocating to credulity than that made by Werfel's *Bernadette* because the novelist has been to some extent restrained by the biographer: but those readers familiar with Edmund Gardner's thoroughly documented history of the saint will miss, in this newer work, the notes, the bibliography, the fine illustrations, and, most of all, the informative chapter headings which did so much to clarify Gardner's monograph on the tangled history of Italian religion, politics and letters in the epoch that immediately followed the age of Dante.

Mrs Lund's very readable translation of the Norwegian text is given like any circulating-library novel without note, bibliography or index, and the single page, headed 'Contents', offers a barren list of untitled chapters, which is no sort of use to the reader wishing to find his place again in the book he lays down for an hour.

That Sigrid Undset had access to the best authorities when compiling her sympathetic narrative is clear, and it is possible that some texts discovered since Professor Gardner wrote may have reached her hands. One instance of this possibility occurs on page 193 where, by an unfortunate transposition of paragraphs, Sigrid Undset appears to record two separate occasions when Gregory XI disguised himself in order to visit Catherine Benincasa at the Palazzo Scotti in Genoa when on his

way back from Avignon in 1375, whereas Gardner quite definitely speaks of only one such meeting.

The general reader will find this book admirable as an introduction to one of the most remarkable of women, whose intellect, charity, courage and endurance combined to make her a worthy precursor of St Teresa of Avila, whom she surpasses in human tenderness and—possibly—in political insight. Her tenderness is emphasized by her later biographer who fills out her story with a good deal of exegetic matter regarding saintliness.

Sigrud Undset had lived to end her book with a chapter on the state of the modern world. 'It is not given to us', she writes, 'to know what Christendom's final fate on earth will be . . . In the light of the split atom some subjects become as it were transparent. But who can say how mankind will react to the new discoveries it makes? We sorely need the wisdom of the saints.'

NAOMI ROYDE SMITH

THE ART OF PAUL VALÉRY: A Study in Dramatic Monologue. By Francis Scarfe. (Heinemann; 25s.)

Mr Scarfe's study of Valéry is obviously the fruit of long and loving familiarity with the poet's work and his knowledge of the considerable body of critical work that exists is evident. His book is intended, one imagines, for the reader himself familiar not only with Valéry's work but also with at any rate the more important commentaries. Mr Scarfe does not, except incidentally, give interpretations; for the poems of *Charmes*, for instance, he refers readers to the commentaries of Alain and Mme Noulet, at the same time warning them of their fallibility. While it is clear that such analyses are not within the scope of this book, which is concerned mainly to show the dramatic evolution of Valéry, one may regret their absence and hope that the writer will provide them in another work, for it is obvious that he has much still to say about the poems and equally obvious that what he has to say must be very seriously considered.

What one may call the thesis of the book is ably and plausibly argued, though there may be a tendency towards over-emphasis. While one knew well enough that much of the poetry expressed an interior drama, involving the relationship of potential selves and other metaphysical quandaries, no one before Mr Scarfe has analysed the dramatic elements in such detail or with such technical distinctions. His approach is mainly linguistic, though he does not lose sight of the fact that a poem is an organic whole. In the chapter on *Charmes* his method does indeed seem somewhat arid, as the consideration of the longer poems from a purely dramatic angle necessitates a partial