

to the common reader over here. The contributors mostly occupy academic posts in the United States, though there is a significant leavening of Europeans who hold professorships respectively in Switzerland, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and Scotland. Wherever English 'English' schools flourish, then, a chart of this network would only have large blanks. The Russian Formalists are cited much oftener than any English critics. Yet, in the course of an assault on the now rather old 'New Criticism', the point is made that 'the great English critics of this century—men as diverse in other respects as Richards, Lewis, Empson, and Leavis—never doubted that writing is a human act and implies an audience or reader' (p. 219).

That phrase gives the key theme of the whole book. In the opening essay, Hans Robert Jauss invites us to approach a literary text as a 'notation', requiring therefore a reading which is in effect a re-writing. Though they are never mentioned, this must remind one of the work of Roland Barthes and

Julia Kristeva, and of a recent lecture by Raymond Williams (*New Left Review*, No. 82). A literary text, being a tissue of codes which predispose the reader by internal strategies to a very definite type of reception, cannot be isolated from the reader any more than a piece of music can be heard without a listener. In other words, a literary text is more like a score requiring to be played than a product ready to be consumed. Round this very simple and basic insight (Marxist in its provenance), the recurrent concern of the whole book is the ways in which past texts interact with present readers, and how the history of the reading of a text belongs to its continued existence.

Modern American and European literary theory is sometimes dismissed as no more than a very belated discovery of what was current in Oxford and Cambridge fifty years ago, only freshly dressed in outlandish jargon. A collection like this helps to show how much truth there is in such a judgement—not very much.

FERGUS KERR OP

HERESY, CRUSADE AND INQUISITION IN SOUTHERN FRANCE, 1100-1250, by Walter L. Wakefield. *George Allen & Unwin*, London, 1974. 288 pp. £5.25.

To attempt to chronicle the interior, spiritual developments of an individual is a formidable undertaking; to do the same for a whole society is almost impossible. An historian may be able to familiarise himself with the declared feelings and overt actions of a people, in other words, with the external aspects of a society; but to divine the motive forces, the inspiration behind such actions, is a rare achievement. Professor Wakefield has made a brave if ultimately unsuccessful attempt at the former; he has unfortunately failed to achieve the latter.

He has divided his study. In the first part he attempts, a trifle ambitiously, to describe the origins, growth and suppression of heresy in 194 pages of text. The second consists of several contemporary documents mainly concerned with the Inquisition. The documents themselves are interesting, well chosen and translated. The first half of the work is less satisfying.

In his preface Wakefield states that his book is 'deprived of a claim to originality' because of the extent to which it rests on the researches of others. He records his debt to such notable authorities as Antoine Don-

daine OP, Manselli and Dossat; his neglect of the primary sources has unfortunate results, noticeably in his discussion of the all-important question of the origins of heresy in Languedoc. The appearance of a catalogue of erudite opinion frequently bewilders, and is often used to support questionable hypotheses in place of an original corpus of contemporary evidence. Such an approach arouses a pervasive sense of *deja vu* in the informed reader, and it can only serve to confuse anyone approaching the subject for the first time. His account of the Crusades led by Simon de Montfort and the Capetian Kings is more satisfactory. The tumultuous course of events is accurately and at times enthusiastically described.

Throughout the work Wakefield never dissents from the traditional and most widely held views of scholars. He again advances the theory of the indirect derivation of Catharism from primitive Manicheism via Bogomilism, an opinion formulated initially by Runciman and later advanced by Dondaine. Recent research has shown this connection, although plausible and attractive in its neat simplicity, is far from being as 'generally agreed' as the

author would have us believe. Fr Don-daine's theories of the conversion of the Languedocian heretics from 'absolute' to 'mitigated' dualism at the alleged Council of St Felix de Caraman about 1170 are appropriated entirely without inquiries into their reliability.

Fr Dondaine assumes, like Professor Wakefield, that the Cathars were one united group, whereas the evidence would seem to point to there being no single body of doctrine. When each group of Cathars is treated independently it is seen that each held only a number of doctrines similar to those of the Bogomils. Moreover, Yves Dossat has made a good case for the Council of St Felix never having taken place. This, added to Fr Dondaine's own admission that his conversion theory is pure hypothesis, renders the 'importation theory' distinctively 'not proven'.

Being largely content with the internal explanation of heresy, Wakefield never satisfactorily examines its external causes. Why should such alien ideas prove so attractive, and how in fact did they reach the South of France at all? Much is made of the 'upswelling of piety' of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which seems a somewhat meagre description of the evangelical explosion of the time, and which in any case is not sufficient explanation in it-

self. Widespread alienation from a corrupt church and the hierarchy's disregard of increasing pressure for reform gave rise to wholesale desertion from orthodoxy, we are told. If this was so why were there not similar movements on a similar scale in earlier centuries, when corruption was equally widespread?

All in all it is Professor Wakefield's caution and brevity which defeats him. A great deal of worthwhile socio-economic detail is contained in the work but poor presentation and inadequate explanation detracts from its value. He suggests that the Church had become disastrously enmeshed in the feudal nexus, and that this social structure was breaking down in Languedoc: sections of the population were no longer fitting traditional roles. Yet he does not correlate this evidence to point out that Catharism, an essentially anti-feudal 'religion', achieved its greatest success in a highly sophisticated, wealthy, mercantilist, and increasingly de-feudalised state, with a degree of national consciousness unique in western Europe. An independent, heretical Languedoc would have been an undoubted threat to the rest of the feudal world.

At the end of the book one is left, rather sadly, with the impression of unfulfilled promise.

ALLAN WHITE, OP

DISCRETION AND VALOUR. Religious conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe, by Trevor Beeson. *Collins Fontana*, London, 1974. 60p.

Within little more than three hundred pages this book gives a broad and up-to-date survey of the condition of religion in the Communist-controlled states of eastern Europe. A thorny subject—but the British Council of Churches' committee which produced it has achieved a measure of objectivity that compares favourably with the sort of propaganda one usually reads. The book will be very valuable to all who wish to understand the very different situations obtaining in the various countries concerned.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland and the Orthodox Church in Rumania are obviously the most flourishing and the least impeded in their work—indeed, one wishes the churches of Britain could show such good statistics. At the opposite end comes Albania, where all institutional religion has been stamped out. In some countries the Communist

state gives a diminishing amount of financial assistance and in countries like East Germany and Poland the churches still carry on social activities. Some valuable statistical information obviously lies behind much that is written about the smaller countries (unlike the USSR), but there is not enough indication as to whether the information comes from church or government or from both.

A large amount of space is given to the USSR, but the historical survey, which begins well, tails off when we come to the last hundred years. We are not made to feel the intolerable oppression and backwardness of the last period of tsarism and the utter ineffectiveness of the Church in combating these. Therefore the October Revolution seems to hang in the air, and the involvement of so many churchmen (inured to subservience to tsarism) with