

chapter, beginning with Pentecost, instead of being the story of the building up of the body of Christ, is a record of the external spread of Christianity. If you prefer to think of the seven deacons in terms of the Converts' Aid Society, as Fr Roche does, rather than in terms of chapter eleven of the Book of Numbers, naturally you will be puzzled by their activities. If you think that the Twelve Apostles are twelve because that is the product of Trinity times the four winds of the earth, not because they are Princes in the new Israel, you will be able to conclude by dissolving the missionary Church into a welter of statistics. You will be able, finally, to deduce the need for missionary work from the mere number of the unconverted, not from the fact that we live in the age of Christ, an age marked by the messianic signs of the preaching of the Gospel to the poor (cf. pp. 22-3!), and the coming up of the nations to worship in Jerusalem.

J.S.

UNDER THE NET. By Iris Murdoch (Chatto and Windus; 12s. 6d.)

One might have feared the worst, A first novel by an Oxford philosophy don, and a woman at that, dealing with literary hacks in London (and including an excursion to the Paris Left Bank) could so easily have been pretentious: an existentialist cautionary tale with clever trimmings. The enthusiastic reception which *Under the Net* has received is perhaps due to its being so unlike what might have been expected, and indeed so unlike the anguished pattern of the contemporary English novel. It is written with spirit and an unflagging sense of the ludicrous, and if the conversation betrays (even as a joke) the linguistic preoccupations of Oxford common rooms, it is soon lost in the elaborate adventures of the narrator, a down-at-heel Irish translator and general literary odd-job-man, which involves him with film tycoons, performing Alsatian dogs and left-wing pubs and politics. It scarcely matters that later recollection will probably conclude that Miss Murdoch's novel has been overpraised, its freshness and picturesque enthusiasm too highly regarded simply because so unlooked for. In the meantime one can welcome with pleasure a new novelist of excellent invention and unusual wit.

P.W.

NOTICES

THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMP, when it was rediscovered in 1934, was at once acknowledged as a most important addition to English literature, though its position in the stream of English spirituality was necessarily more ambiguous. It now achieves the canonization of being included in *The World's Classics* (Oxford; 5s.) and the modernized version prepared by Colonel Butler-Bowden is once more used, with a valuable introduction by Dr R. W. Chambers.