

soon dispersed again by Queen Elizabeth. The Syon nuns have kept their continuity to this day, but the Dominicanesses were less fortunate. They went into exile where they suffered and did not prosper. One of the most dramatic moments in their long history is the death, in a private house in Bruges, of the last of the English sisters: a tragic break of over eighty years followed.

Restarted by Cardinal Howard in Belgium in 1661, the new sisters began painfully to build up the Second Order, and after incredible sufferings and difficulties were finally driven by persecution back to England, where they have steadily recovered from their wounds and built up two convents of strict observance.

May this inspiring and unpretentious narrative of their life, in joy and in sorrow, bring them an increase in their numbers, to tide them over this age of declining faith, that needs more than perhaps any other age the sane and beautiful inspiration of the contemplative life.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

UNPOPULAR OPINIONS. By Dorothy L. Sayers (Gollancz; 8s. 6d.)

Miss Sayers has of recent years turned from thrillers to theology and has applied her skill in relating strange events to their causes to the world about her—a world with its horrors ready-made, but with little consciousness of how they happened, still less of why they happened so. Her opinions, to be sure, are unpopular, if popularity means giving the public what it wants rather than what it needs. 'If we truly require a creative life for ourselves and other people, it is our task to rebuild the world along creative lines; but we must be sure that we desire it enough.' She is an apologist, convinced that man's knowledge of himself demands a theological basis, not merely as a helpful extra but as an indispensable foundation.

This collection of essays and addresses is naturally unequal in value. A section of 'political' writings reveals a robust and patriotic Englishwoman, eager for plain speech and an end to deracinated fashions of every sort and shape. A final series of 'Studies in Sherlock Holmes' elaborates a pseudo-scholarly joke begun by Mgr Ronald Knox in the pages of *BLACKFRIARS* long ago.

It is the 'theological' opinions that matter most. Such papers as 'Forgiveness' and 'What do we believe?' reveal an honest attempt to relate traditional Christian beliefs to desperately urgent modern dilemmas. And yet Miss Sayers is not at ease. Her complaints about 'the Churches' reflect a crucial difficulty: the confused and contradictory answers of the various Christian bodies, their half-heartedness, their fear to offend—all this is an embarrassment to an apologist who claims that there is a consistent Christian teaching which can, and alone can, restore a broken world. There is, in fact, one Church which claims that its teaching is true. And truth is one and universal. It is not the desire to snatch a sectarian advantage that prompts one to remind Miss Sayers that the Catholic claim is a very serious one. Increasingly the battle is going to be between Catholic Christianity

and a godless anarchy. The signs are plain enough, and one can only pray that those who see the need to seek truth and to accept the demands it makes, will not be distracted by any prejudice, cultural, national or whatever it may be. In the meantime, one can gratefully acknowledge an ally.

I. E.

JEROME SAVONAROLA. By Mgr John O'Connor. (Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

Those who are apt to think Savonarola a firebrand will probably not feel inclined to alter their minds after reading this provocative sketch of his career. Nor does his sanctity stand out in any greater relief by the blackening of contemporary characters. The character of Alexander VI could have received a more just treatment. It is easy to say that the 'conclave was a farce' but the historical fact is that there was a canonical election, and there is no irresistible proof that Alexander bought the Papacy. The tale of mule-loads of silver (the writer says gold) has long since been discredited. There is also proof from the pontificate of Alexander that there were other motives at work besides money. It is also acknowledged by historians that his treatment of Savonarola was marked by extreme patience and forbearance. Again it is not historically certain that Savonarola demanded of Lorenzo the Magnificent on his death bed, as a condition of absolution, that he should restore the liberties of Florence.

On the hypothesis that the excommunication of Savonarola was valid, it is difficult to follow the argument which renders him immune from its effects, since even in the hour of death canonical penalties are set aside only in favour of the reception of the Sacraments. But in point of sober fact Savonarola's whole contention was that his excommunication was null and void, and therefore he was free to disregard it. The matter is admittedly obscure, but is deserving of a less cavalier treatment than it receives in these rough notes.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

THE RIDDLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

This book was first published in 1931, and the second edition in 1936. Sir Edwyn Hoskyns died the following year, and this new third edition of 1947 appears with a very few alterations and additions. The work has for many years held an important place among high churchmen, and is indeed a sort of present-day summary of the position arrived at by a certain section of the Cambridge Anglican tradition in New Testament scholarship. Its object is (p. 10) 'to display the critical method at work upon the New Testament documents', which are the evidence provided by the early Church for the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. The riddle is 'the relation between Jesus of Nazareth and the primitive Christian Church' (p. 12). The book sets out to prove that there can be no 'unbridgeable gulf