

THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OF THE EASTERN CHURCH. By Vladimir Lossky. (James Clarke and Co.; 16s.)

The late Vladimir Lossky was one of the best-known Russian Orthodox writers of the *diaspora*. Unlike the majority of *émigrés* he belonged to that section of Orthodoxy which is under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow and was able to provide information about religious life under Soviet rule. He was also able to return to Russia for a visit. On the other hand, living in Paris and paying frequent visits to England where he was well known as a lecturer, he knew the western religious scene extremely well. The work under review was first published in French in 1944. It was designed to present Orthodoxy to western Christians, Catholic or Protestant, among whom the author had a host of friends. While desiring nothing more than a *rapprochement* between Christians, Vladimir Lossky regretted any attempt to under-estimate the theological differences between them. While it remains true that political and cultural factors were largely responsible for the rift between East and West, it would be wrong to regard the great theological issues, such as the procession of the Holy Ghost or the divine energies, as being of purely academic interest. The author is at pains throughout to stress the interdependence of theology and religious life and the effect which a given position with regard to any of the great controverted questions can have on the spirituality of those who hold that position. The value of this work for those who wish to study the Orthodox viewpoint is enhanced by the fact that Vladimir Lossky was less eclectic than some other contemporary Orthodox thinkers, so that his work is based mainly on the great classics, both patristic and medieval, of eastern theology and spirituality. There are obscure passages in the work, but then some of the problems treated, especially in trinitarian theology, are very difficult. There are also some very fine passages, especially in the last chapter.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

SAINT JERÔME. By Jean Steinmann. (Cerf.)

This is a gay and imaginative little book, which portrays St Jerome with an occasionally bowdlerized charm. It is odd that it should have been written by so good a scholar as Jean Steinmann, because so much of the reconstruction is so flimsy, and there is such a curious lack of any sense of period; thus in spite of the cover St Jerome was not a cardinal in any modern sense; in spite of page 1 nothing can be learnt from Pompeii about the appearance of his father's house in Pannonia; in spite of page 16, fourth-century Rome cannot have resembled

modern Naples; in spite of page 18 it is not really tenable that the Emperor Julian showed himself coldly and uselessly cruel. Such a list could be extended to the end, but it would be rather like breaking a butterfly upon the wheel.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

LA LUMIÈRE DANS LES TÉNÉBRES. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

This is the tenth *Cahier de la Pierre-qui-vire*—the attractive name of the Abbey at Yonne. And it is certainly rock-like in its staunch adherence to the French school of piety and prayer. The 'light in the darkness' is private individual prayer, and the *Cahier* is an anthology of the post-Reformation French teaching on prayer and meditation set out in three sections—Perfection, Progress, and Purification. It will make a useful spring-board for meditation. But it is surprising to find this highly specialized and somewhat outmoded form of spirituality coming from a modern abbey. The well-produced photographs seem to suggest the barrenness of the theme for modern times. They begin with charming nature studies of trees and reflections in water and conclude with a beautiful but bare abbey church which strikes the viewer as being as cold and empty as a Protestant cathedral. Surely the revival in liturgical prayer and *lectio divina* has brought us back now to realize that the light that shines in the darkness is our Lord himself, to be found today as always in his body the Church, and radiating from his eucharistic body in the sacrifice of the altar. Prayer catches this light from the altar and is constantly fed by the sacramental life of the Church. Meditation, *lectio divina*, contemplation rise from this foundation—and the church no longer remains cold and empty.

This is not to decry the great work of Bossuet in particular, of Bérulle, Olier, Lallement and the others. But little seems to be gained by repeating their teaching *verbatim*. What they revealed in the nature and life of private prayer has now to be introduced into the wider and deeper ocean of the prayer of Christ. The light shining in the darkness can enlighten this teaching as well. One would have expected a work of this kind of rehabilitation to issue from a modern abbey rather than the rehashing of the old material. It will however provide a book for meditation for those brought up in the French school of spirituality.
C.P.

THE HERMIT OF CAT ISLAND. By Peter F. Anson. (Burns and Oates; 21s.)

The Hermit of Cat Island in the Bahamas was J. C. Hawes—architect, parson, priest, *monsignor*, hermit and always architect. Peter Anson's very readable account of his life is based on documents