

synthesis of the work of historians, exegetes, theologians, philosophers and spiritual writers who have all thought about our Lord. If this kind of popularization can ever be successful, and I simply do not know whether it can or not, then *Christ and Us* is a very fine book.

For those whose knowledge of theology is not great, or for those whose time is short, then this book will be invaluable as a guide to the way in which modern theologians are thinking. The clarity of the translation will make it possible for such readers to see for themselves many of the problems that Père Daniélou mentions only in passing, if at all. It is vital to remember when reading a book of this kind, particularly with so able an author, that they are problems. The ease of the writing as well as the simplification could easily delude the reader into thinking that much of what is said is self-evident. But this is far from the case. In order to make one's own the conclusions, often tentative, of theologians like Rahner, Durrwell, Mersch or Cerfaux, it is necessary not only to read considerably, but also to do some hard thinking for oneself. I think it probable that this book could be a valuable starting point for such reading and thinking.

The chapter dealing with philosophy disappointed me most. It is combined with Christology which is dealt with as adequately as anything else in the book. But Fr Daniélou has seen fit to confine his philosophy to a criticism of the work of H. Dumery. It is a very able criticism, but hardly sufficient as an account of the place of philosophy in the study of Christ.

The bibliographies at the end of each chapter could be enlarged with profit, and it is worth noting that many of the titles given in French are now available in English.

NEIL MIDDLETON

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S LOVE, by Dom Georges Lefebvre; Geoffrey Chapman, 12s. 6d.

Of all subjects for the writer the most notable is love, and the most impossible. This is particularly the case if it is God's love, with all the greater difficulty of a divine mystery over a human. Dom Lefebvre has not avoided every pitfall, not even some unnecessary ones, although he has valuable and effective things to say.

To begin with criticism; although his plan is unexceptionable—God's gift of love, the conditions of our response, the resultant union, its consequences—its shape is not well impressed on us and the book, both in the long and the short run, lacks both structure and development. Paragraphs multiply themselves without evident interconnection. Sentences, often needlessly involved, go their separate ways. Yet they are usually both true and sensible and also often illuminating. Proof reader and translator have admitted further blemishes, errors of spelling and an occasional clumsy period, but it was the original publishers, *Les Editions du Cerf*, who should have made their author discipline himself better.

For the earlier part of the book makes really awkward reading. It flows ill, nor is there relief for us from illustration, anecdote or personality. Fortunately the atmosphere lightens in the second half and the writing is much more consecutive. Only further blocks of quotation from St John of the Cross and St Teresa remain to stub the mind as it presses on. Apart from these the Bible is the only authority cited, but unfortunately with its concreteness and imagery siphoned off. Abstraction prevails, the greatest defect of the work.

Yet one finishes and puts it down with real gain. It is honest, inspired, intolerant of pusillanimity, undistracted from its divine goal. The very clumsiness of delivery gives earnest of prophetic summons, Amos in the fields, the beloved disciple stumbling out his Apocalypse, John Vianney pleading from his rural pulpit.

There are sharp enunciations of truth: love is frustrate unless Trinitarian; in Christ the Father himself loves us; our life exists that our desire for God may grow; to have trust is to let God make our plans; renunciation is not cutting off, but looking in a new way at our surroundings; a soul possessed by grace is a source of grace to souls; to respond to grace helps to redeem the world; we must beware of turning our brethren down as the Pharisees did Christ; if we are finding joy in God we shall delight in making others happy; and so on.

And there are wise counsels about perseverance and prayer and renunciation and regard for others and many other aspects of the Christian life. Some of this material is evidently the fruit of experience. But sometimes one wonders whether the experience should be generalized. Perhaps no 'spiritual' writer wholly avoids this mistake, though it would seem to be a great one. May not God perhaps treat with each of us uniquely? After all he created each of us a unique personality. Too many people tell us what should be going on between each of us and his creator. But it would be wrong to end with this complaint. On the subject of God's love Dom Lefebvre is both helpful and energizing.

P. D. HOLDSWORTH, O.S.B.

THE WISDOM OF THE DESERT, extracts from the *Verba Seniorum*, introduced and translated by Thomas Merton; Hollis and Carter, 16s.

We are *initiated* into the Christian life and not simply taught *about* it, any formulation always pre-supposing the Christian experience itself. The call we are hearing to make a return to sources is to enable us to discover our way back to God by seeing what is essential in our faith and what is more or less external, and this because so often we seem to have the style while the vigour and meaning have been lost. Nor is this re-sourcefulness only scriptural—though it must always be principally this—but a return to the *Via Regia*, the whole Western ascetical tradition from Cassian to Charles de Foucauld. Professor Chadwick, in the introduction to his translation of parts of the *Verba*, Cassian's *Conferences* and St Benedict's *Rule*, which comprises his volume 'Western Asceticism', justifies—