

which Schweizer thinks John's epistles are a deliberate reaction. The tendency exemplified in the Pastorals, on the other hand, Schweizer presents as a reaction against fanatical gnosticism. In fact, however, is it not certain that the Epistles of John were written in the face of attacks on Christian churches by, precisely, some form of pre-gnosticism? To this fundamental context of the Epistles the Diotrephes episode is purely incidental: John's views about order in the Church are simply not exposed. This method of reading views on Church order into all New Testament writings, whether or not they actually reflect it, has resulted in considerable distortion in this book.

Moreover, in order to reach his conclusions Schweizer has found it necessary to reject the testimony of the earliest of the Apostolic Fathers on Church order in their time, as deviations from Christ's intentions. His whole thesis denies any authentic tradition outside scripture, and he even treats some of the later canonical books (the Pastorals, Ephesians and Colossians) as already suspect. Finally, Schweizer asserts the need for the Church to take stock of itself and of its order in each age by immediate and fresh reference to the message of the New Testament. What is lacking from his analysis is the admission that it is possible for Christ's Church to develop authentically by reference not only to scripture but also to Jesus living in the Church itself continuously to the present day. And did the Holy Spirit, the promised strengthener and guide, defect so soon?

ROBERT SHARP, O.P.

*SPIRIT OF FLAME* and *MOTHER OF CARMEL*, by Allison Peers; S.C.M. Press, 7s. 6d. each.

In the Church's mysteries, the flaming candle and the waters of the font together symbolize her power of regeneration. In *Spirit of Flame* and *Mother of Carmel* the two great Spanish saints whose favourite symbols of the divine action were fire and water, are portrayed in their complementary role in regenerating not only the religious family of Carmel but the spirit of contemplative prayer in the Church.

Professor Allison Peers' study of St John of the Cross is a masterpiece of short biography. His wide scholarship gives precision and depth to this most readable story and the very fair presentation of the religious turmoil which forms the background of St John's life shows both tact and skill. He owns his debt to contemporary biographies with what one can only describe as reverent humour. Peers' keen literary perception highlights his appreciation of the Saint's writings: his own style becomes lyrical in appraising the poems, in particular the *Spiritual Canticle*. Indeed, in his enthusiasm for the form of the stanzas he shows some detachment from the underlying theology. The splendid alignment of the teaching of St John of the Cross with scripture, in the second part of the book (which takes the form almost of an apologia for the mystic

life) would, as part of the biography, have contributed to its integrity: St John is revered by his spiritual children as the Doctor of faith rather than of light or darkness. There is no better accompaniment to the study of a saint's doctrine than the story of how he himself lived it. Allison Peers is at pains to give us this story. The endearing human qualities of the saint, his love of nature and music, even his admissions of loneliness, all have value in our understanding of his doctrine.

In contrast to the reflective and slightly awed study of St John of the Cross, the portrait of St Teresa is homely and direct. With insight and affection Allison Peers has distilled from her own writings the quintessence of this Mother of souls: her simplicity and charm, her virility and practical genius; above all, her spiritual greatness. His own enchantment with her words has made the task of selection difficult and the narrative is sometimes overcrowded with quotation. Inevitably her writing looms larger than it could in fact have done in that crowded life where her communion with God overflowed in ceaseless activity, organizing, travelling and the round of religious observance and domestic work. (When it was her turn to do the cooking, she found her Lord among the pots and pans). But it is, of course, her own *Life* and *Foundations* that portray for us the life and work that bore fruit in her incomparable teaching on prayer, which, in the *Way of Perfection* and the *Interior Castle* give her today the title of Mother of souls.

As attractive twin paper-backs these reprints of *Spirit of Flame* and *Mother of Carmel* should go far in furthering Allison Peers' purpose of making these two saints better known and loved and, above all, explored.

SR ANNE, O.D.C.

FATHER RUPERT MAYER, compiled by Anton Koerbling, S.J.; Mercier Press.

There were not so many Christian heroes in Germany prepared to stand up even to Hitler that one more or less makes no difference. So it is a pity that Fr Rupert Mayer, S.J., though hero enough to be a candidate for the Church's altars, does not find a worthy biography in these pages. One is even reminded of a Dominican 'postulator' for the canonization of Bl Martin Porres, who ascribed the reluctance of his very attractive 'Blessed' to work provable miracles to fear of more biographies!

However, the facts of Fr Rupert's life, his charity and courage are served up here and should be nourishment for a sound digestion. Some of us weaker brethren may hope for another cook to serve the sauce and condiments of a little more humanity.

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