

St Teresa and St John of the Cross, nor has he neglected earlier examples such as the great Ramon Llull. Here we have the first of three volumes upon them all.

In the first volume, here revised—but not much—we are given the cream: St Ignatius, Luis de Granada, Luis de León, the two Carmelite saints and some others. What does a reader look for in such a book, and what will he find? He will look for information to simplify the understanding of the works of these writers: data on their lives, some account of the matter of their books, hints on their special approaches to the subject, mysticism.

The reader will find adequate facts about the lives, except where too few facts exist; the matter of their works is discussed; the special 'slant' of each writer is touched on. The reader gets more: he is carried away by the enthusiasm that Professor Peers has for his subject. He will want to read these great men and women themselves. That, after all, is what should be done.

It is now half a century since the wave of mysticism has overtaken the Western soul. What has it got to show for itself? In the first place a confusion between holiness and mystical phenomenon. The former still consists in the love of God and obedience to the Holy Roman Church; the latter is still only a flower and its counterfeit, a weed, opium-like, which can lull the adept into a false security on this earth. There is a danger in books of this kind that they pick the flower and omit or understress the plant and its ground. From a spiritual point of view the graces of prayer are gifts; it is needful to be able to recognise them. We can counterfeit them but not merit them. From a literary point of view some mystics have been supreme writers, but that is quite another matter. Again there is the danger of confusing the two elements.

The best chapter in the book is on St Teresa. That on St Ignatius is, I guess, pre-Brémond, and the approach is vitiated by an obsession with the Exercises, which are after all only exercises. The chapter on St John of the Cross from a literary point of view is still out of date, because no year passes without new discoveries, e.g., the latest Damaso Alonso book, *Poesía española*.

It seems to me that the works of Luis de Granada and those of Luis de León are not mystical, though I am grateful for their inclusion for study in this book.

C.C.-E.

THE ROD, THE ROOT AND THE FLOWER. By Coventry Patmore. (Grey Walls Press; 10s. 6d.)

The writings of Coventry Patmore can be considered from many points of view: the literary, both as to prose and poetry, the spiritual,

mystical, theological, and philosophical. He is the poet of the metaphysician, more especially of the Thomist. Whether his appreciation, or as he would say, his perception of the richness of metaphysical truths was that of a saint or a poet it is very hard to say.

In his Introduction to this last work of the author, Mr Derek Patmore says it was the final flowering of his talent and that in it he summed up his very personal philosophy about human and divine love. Yet I doubt that anyone will grasp that philosophy from reading only this work. And was it a personal philosophy? I think Coventry Patmore himself would have rejected such a description of it, and would have pointed to the number of quotations of saints and philosophers to show that he was but engaged on what he describes as the 'worthiest occupation of the wise . . . to dig again the wells which the Philistines have filled'. In his own preface to this volume, Coventry Patmore says: 'The readers for whom alone I expect a full and hearty, though silent, welcome, are those literary persons who, I am sincerely glad to see, find my writings, as Fuseli said of Blake, "D—d to steal from, not knowing the sources from which I also have derived my matter—and make it my only claim to be heard that I have done so".' My view of this book as a whole is best expressed by a further stealing of the author's own 'aurea dicta'. He says, 'The highest and deepest thoughts' do not 'voluntary move in harmonious numbers', but rather run to 'grotesque epigram and doggerel'. Grotesque may be too strong to apply to anything Patmore wrote, but as he was professedly declaring the content of the theological and philosophical doctrines of the Catholic Church, we have a standard by which we can judge what he says, rejoicing in some things and rejecting others. Many of these thoughts are very personal to himself and would find their proper place in conversation rather than in a book as final conclusions apart from their context of accompanying thoughts. Two other 'aurea dicta' may be applied to them. They are: 'Let each man', says St Paul, 'abound in his own sense. When once he has got into the region of perception, let him take care that his vision is his own, and not fancy he can profit himself or others much by trying to appropriate *their* peculiar variations of the common theme.' And, 'In the mouth of two witnesses shall all things be established. One witness is human instinct inspired by God; the other is the sanction and corroboration of the Church.' Not all that Patmore says would receive this corroboration, at least not without some qualifications. When one has a life-long experience of, and an overwhelming feeling of gratitude for, the stimulation provided by the writings of Coventry Patmore it is hard to write these things of any of them, but it must be done—not, I sincerely hope, with any effect of discouraging people to read him.

Coventry Patmore's writings on 'woman', 'love' and 'marriage' can be fully understood only by some knowledge of the Aristotelean-Thomist philosophy which he held, particularly of the metaphysical truths and analogy. Years of meditation combined with a poet's insight gave him the vision usually called 'mystical' into these truths. Though he never mentions the 'Actus' and 'Potentia' of Aristotelean metaphysics, he saw them as the principles of all things created, as the basis of their union with each other and with God. As a poet he used the concrete term 'women' for the abstract idea of potentiality because he saw in the female the perfect embodiment of that principle. Wherever there is union between creatures, or between a creature and God, there is 'act' and 'potency': there is the 'giving' and 'receiving' of Divine Love and of its distant but true analogy of human love. For Patmore the physical union of the sexes further exemplified the principle but was negligible and not essential to human love. On page 149 he plainly states this to be, as St Thomas says, an 'accidental perfection' of marriage. It is in his wonderful poem named 'The Child's Purchase' that we see best what the terms 'woman', 'love', 'marriage', meant to him.

DAVID DONOHUE, O.P.

OUR SAVIOUR AND HIS LOVE FOR US. By Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. Translated by A. Bouchard. (B. Herder Book Co.; 45s.)

This English rendering of Père Garrigou-Lagrange's great book on the spirituality of the Incarnation and Redemption is a truly magnificent volume for which ordinary reader and critic alike can offer only praise and thanksgiving. The translator has done his work efficiently and artistically, combining clarity and fidelity to the original with a style not lacking in distinction and the qualities of good prose. He has been careful, too, in the footnotes, to refer to existing English translations of the French works mentioned by the author, and this will be greatly appreciated by those to whom the originals are not accessible.

Readers of Père Garrigou-Lagrange's other well-known books on the spiritual life will remember how the author's eminent mastery of Thomist theology was brought to bear on the subject of Christian perfection and contemplation; here they will find that same learning serving as the foundation upon which are built 'Elevations'—the word is suggested by an inevitable comparison with Bossuet's classic—on the mysteries of our Lord's Incarnation and his redemptive Passion and Sacrifice. For many years the author has explained to theological students St Thomas's treatise on the Incarnation; here, however, he is addressing specially souls that are seriously striving to live the life of the Spirit, and so, while in no way departing from the scientific precision of the schools, his manner of approach has become informed