

might be thinking that we are all getting entangled in the unessentials. Yet for every hundred that open such a book as this from idle curiosity surely one at least is moved to get nearer to God, and that should satisfy even the 'santico'.

COLUMBA CARY-ELWES, O.S.B.

UNSEEN WARFARE, being the *Spiritual Combat* and *Path to Paradise* of Lorenzo Scupoli as edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theophan the Recluse, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, with an introduction by H. A. Hodges, M.A., D.PHIL. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

Readers of this periodical are familiar with the name, if not with the text, of the work called in English *The Spiritual Combat*, written by the Theatine clerk regular Lorenzo Scupoli and first published in 1589. It is a spiritual classic of the so-called Counter-Reformation, widely read and treasured in many languages even to our own day. But the adventures and metamorphoses that the *Spiritual Combat* underwent in eastern Europe—as summed up in the words of the title-page above—are news to most of us.

The Spiritual Combat as it eventually left the hands of its author was an essentially practical work, centred on the passion of Christ, concerned with the daily discipline of mind and will of the Christian *miles*, with a concern for prayer for the most part limited to the practice of formal meditation. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century copies of the *Spiritual Combat* and of Scupoli's *Path to Paradise* came into the hands of a distinguished writer of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Nicodemus, who was a *megaloskhemos* (highest degree of monk) upon Mount Athos, and is therefore known as 'the Hagiorite'. Nicodemus ran the two works together, translated them into Greek, with some unimportant omissions, added in footnotes biblical and patristic passages as *pièces justificatives*, and made some textual alterations and additions. The most important of these are a carrying of Scupoli's *askesis* of the senses a stage further, raising the mind above the sensory and imaginative level; and an expansion of Scupoli's short chapter on mental prayer, making it into, as Professor Hodges says, 'a statement of basic hesychast doctrine'.

This Greek version of Scupoli was published at Venice in 1796 under the title of *Unseen Warfare* ('Aorates Polemos'). Nicodemus claimed no more than to have 'adorned and corrected' the original: its real author, he said, was 'a certain wise man'—but he did not name Scupoli. To offer to the eighteenth-century Orthodox a religious work by a 'Latin' author would have been something like offering to English Catholics a book by Jeremy Taylor or William Law.

But that was only the beginning. The Greek *Unseen Warfare* had a considerable success, and it was taken up by Theophan the Recluse, who in 1866 had resigned the Russian see of Vladimir and betaken himself to a solitary life at the Vychensky monastery. Theophan proceeded to make a Russian version of Nicodemus-Scupoli. He seems to have been as ignorant of its Western origin as everybody else, but he altered it considerably more freely than Nicodemus had altered the Italian. Apart from such things as incorporating Nicodemus's footnotes from the Bible and the fathers into the text (omitting all except one from the Western fathers), he removed or altered those things that seemed to him specifically 'Latin' in phraseology or theological implication. Sometimes it is only the same thing in other words, e.g., 'short prayers', etc., for 'ejaculations'. At greater length he rewrote several ascetical chapters, and substituted his own for eight chapters on prayer: here most of Nicodemus went overboard and all that Scupoli has said on the subject, except his introductory chapter. In place of Scupoli on meditation Theophan gives a fuller statement than Nicodemus of hesychast teaching: 'Prayer is no longer thought of mainly as petition, and as a means to the end of the spiritual warfare. . . . Instead, we are shown how to discipline the spirit into an abiding sense of the presence of God. Perpetual prayer is set clearly before us as our aim, with the Jesus Prayer as the means to its attainment, and warmth of heart as a characteristic accompaniment of it.' We see here (and elsewhere) the root difference between Scupoli and Nicodemus's object on the one hand and Theophan's on the other: they were writing for the Church militant at large; he was concerned particularly with the needs of monks and formal contemplatives.

The book now published in English is a translation of Bishop Theophan's version, to which the Professor of Philosophy in the University of Reading has contributed a long and most valuable introduction, from which the above inadequate summary has been digested. He not only explains the history of the book called *Unseen Warfare*, but he goes into some detail about the contributions of the three authors and the significance of their respective points of view. It is hardly necessary to stress the unusual interest and importance of this book, whose history (so far as the present reviewer knows) is unique. And it can be considered from two separate points of view. By studying Theophan's *Unseen Warfare* step by step with Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat* we can see, so to speak, the reactions (all the better for being unconscious) to a characteristically Counter-Reformation piece of spiritual writing of a man brought up in one 'school' of the Eastern tradition. Here is no question of the violent twist and break which the Protestant Reformation involved; the 'main line' of that Eastern tradition is every bit as

authentic as ours in the West (and should any Orthodox reader feel that to be patronising, I disclaim any such intention—I write *ex animo*). It is not every day that the world of Trent and the world of the Three Holy Hierarchs can be found contrasting and combining in this way, and the book's value for further research is obvious.

And then there is *Unseen Warfare* considered on its own merits as a religious work. On that I am even less qualified to express an opinion. But I gladly shelter myself behind the Starlets Nicodemus in his foreword, even for those of us who are not monks or nuns: 'So, Christ-loving readers, accept this book graciously and gladly, and learning from it the art of 'Unseen Warfare', strive not merely to fight, but to fight according to the law, to fight as you should, so that you may be crowned. For, according to the Apostle, "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully".'

DONALD ATTWATER

SOME RARE VIRTUES. By Raoul Plus, S.J. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

Any book by Fr Plus will be welcomed by hundreds. This deserves a special welcome from his old friends, and should gain him many new ones. Once again there is the feeling that we have the spoken rather than the written word. Pages abound with spiritual maxims, so characteristic of the author, and with examples that are so interesting, persuasive and compelling. This is not a profound book, but it has the strength of simplicity and speaks to the heart.

The author first deals with the virtue of gratitude. He decides that this is a rare virtue, not merely because of man's innate indifference but because of God's incessant generosity. The author gently and skilfully draws away the screen of second causes to reveal him who is the first cause of every gift. Another essay deals with the 'Use of Time'. It is written with a light-heartedness and delicacy most calculated to expose those who, too often, confuse occupation with work and recreation with waste of time. The virtue of moderation or discretion, too, is very well handled. Discretion is carefully distinguished from meanness, excess from enthusiasm, sensible ardour from authentic zeal, and fervour from excitement. Having read this chapter we can better appreciate why the Church only accepts for beatification persons who have practised virtue not only for a notable time, and in an heroic degree, but serenely and without excess.

Graver tones are sounded in the three last chapters of the book. They deal with fortitude in suffering, reparation, devotion to the sick, and—the most forsaken—the mentally defective. As examples of fortitude in suffering the author chooses two names among many: Henri d'Hellencourt and André Bach. These names will be long remembered