

independently of what we say about him.

Towards the end Phillips has important things to say about concept formation in religion. He stresses the importance in philosophy of actually looking to see how religious people use their religious expressions, what place they have in their life. To assume we know *a priori* is a recipe for misunderstanding. In particular, he says some fine things about the place of mystery in religious belief. The mysteriousness of God, he reminds us, is not a matter of a limitation on our knowledge, an epistemological defect; it is not what prevents us from knowing God. God is rather *known as* mysterious, and that God is mysterious is an important element of Christian belief.

The material in this book is quite disparate, and it is not clear that all of it should have been included within the covers of a single volume. But there are plenty of good things in it, as well as some disconcerting ones. It certainly deserves study. The publisher's price seems designed to prevent anybody buying it, which is a pity.

GARETH MOORE OP

ÉTUDES ERIGENIENNES by Édouard Jeuneau. *Études Augustiniennes*, 1987. Paris. p. 749. 2.650.0 Belgian francs.

The studies collected in this volume consist of writings composed between 1969 and 1985 on the work, milieu and influence of John Scottus (also known as Eriugena). Two articles are published here for the first time. The other pieces have been photo-reproduced, and the collection is equipped with additions and corrections as well as indices of names, manuscripts and subjects. Fr Jeuneau is without doubt the doyen of Eriugenian studies, and this collection, as well as being a useful resource, affords an opportunity to take stock of his methods and achievements.

Considering the writings as a whole, I was struck by the assiduity and integrity of Jeuneau's work on Eriugena. His method involves diligent, patient and detailed study, and a total absorption into the text. Jeuneau is a student of the material aspect of medieval scholarship: of codicology, of manuscripts and their transmission and so on. But he is also a student of the *content* of these manuscripts and of medieval thought and ideas.

Jeuneau's treatment of the thought of Eriugena is of two kinds. On the one hand there is the study of themes and images, which is almost a special form of literary criticism. I have in mind here an article on the symbolism of the sea in John's writings, and the *Quatre thèmes érigéniens*, a book that is reproduced here in its entirety. The themes in question are: *le caché et l'obscur; l'effort, le labeur; le plaisir de l'esprit; la prudence et la lenteur*. All but the first epithet might be applied to Jeuneau's own study of John Scottus. On the other hand there is the analytical study that involves detailed exegesis of philosophical and theological arguments. While the author applies a prodigious knowledge of philology and sources, the result is invariably lucid and readable; there is nothing of *le caché et l'obscur* here.

Jeuneau manifests a characteristically French love of ideas for their own sake; but this intellectual aestheticism is coloured with a certain discrete piety. For this reason his study of ideas is never 'merely historical' even though the author rarely inquires as to the 'truth value' of John's

theories. It should be added that Jeauneau manifests another French trait: the love of his own language. Care is taken to make even the most technical discussions elegant: *le plaisir de l'esprit*.

As for *la prudence et la lenteur*, Jeauneau never attempts to present a comprehensive, synthetic account of Eriugena's thought. That would be out of character. He always considers some particular aspect of it.

Of the studies that come most clearly under the third category, two are the articles that appear in print here for the first time. In 'Jean Scot et la métaphysique de feu', from a talk given at the Maison Française in Oxford in 1984, Jeauneau shows how Eriugena adopted from the ps.-Denys the metaphor of fire to explain the manner of God's presence in creation. A particular physical theory of fire is put at the service of ontology. Fire is considered to be all-penetrating and omnipresent, being present even in ice, and yet for the most part unmanifest. It is manifest only in its effects of heat and light and not in itself. To become manifest it requires some grosser material to act upon. In these respects fire is a metaphor for God. It is both manifest and hidden, a fitting image of the ways of affirmation (*kataphasis*) and negation (*apophasis*).

In 'Le thème du retour', based on a course given at the University of Rome in 1982, Jeauneau examines Eriugena's use of the Neoplatonic theme, again taken from the ps.-Denys, of emanation and return. This was to be Eriugena's most lasting and profound influence on subsequent Latin thought, although this influence has rarely been acknowledged, even to this day. But Eriugena's speculations about the return led him to posit an eschatology that would be completely unacceptable to the main stream of Latin theology. In his view there must be some universal return or *apokatastasis* of all beings to their source. But how to square this with the belief in final judgment and the separation of the sheep from the goats? As Jeauneau points out, the question here is not merely that of whether there is a physical hell, with flames and sulphur: John Scottus had no doubt that this should not be understood literally. To solve the deeper problem, John distinguished the general return, in which all will participate, from the special return of the elect. The former pertains to nature and the latter to grace. By one human nature will return to the integrity of the 'earthly paradise' and to the *data naturae*; by the other the elect will be divinized and will pass over to the *dona gratiae*. With great ingenuity, John finds support for his theory in an allegorical interpretation of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

I fear that this collection will be read only by specialists. It deserves a much wider readership.

P.L. REYNOLDS

SACRIFICE: ITS NATURE AND PURPOSE by Geoffrey Ashby.
SCM Press, 1988. Pp. 151. £7.50.

The heart of this book is a sustained argument for interpreting the death of Christ in terms of the passover sacrifice. That requires the recognition that the western world lacks an awareness of sacrifice that is still present elsewhere (e.g. in Africa and India), requires therefore that the proper meaning of cultic sacrifice be recovered particularly with the help of ancient Hebrew sacrifice, and also requires that this revived understanding should