

in different ways, in a series of different meditations—'The Creative Source', 'Faith', 'Baptism', 'The Holy Spirit', 'Christ our Model', 'Love in Christ', etc., etc. Each theme is drawn together in a final paragraph showing how it is exemplified in the mother of God.

The book is claimed to offer 'a biblical theology for everyday life'. This seems an inaccurate characterisation of what it does. It is biblical in the sense of giving a rationalised and abstractly expressed theology drawn from biblical sources, it is not biblical in presenting the concrete, colourful, sweaty, dramatic proclamation of salvation which the Bible offers. Nor is it the ideal book for the everyday life of many, though teachers of scholastic disciplines, still a large class, may well profit thereof.

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

VISIONS AND PROPHECIES, by Karl Rahner; Burns and Oates, 12s. 6d.

The latest of Professor Rahner's contributions to *Quaestiones Disputatae* to be translated into English is also the least exciting. Rahner is admired for his ability to treat an urgent problem with vital elucidity. The value of his work is that it takes our present concerns into account. How far are Catholics interested in visionaries today? Some may be grateful for further information about the peculiar history of the Fatima narratives, but it is to be feared that often enough such things are merely curious bases for ghetto jokes.

Some of the examples Rahner produces are decidedly unfunny. It is abundantly proved that saints are saints for reasons quite other than having visions. St Mary Magdalene of Pazzi watched Jesus write his name on her heart with the milk of the Blessed Virgin. St Catherine of Siena believed that our Lady had revealed to her that she was not conceived immaculate. Bl. Margaret Ebner was instructed by the child Jesus 'how his holy circumcision was performed', and believed she heard the voice of the Lord bidding her give suck to the wooden statue of the child Jesus which she kept in a crib. Visions in general appear less interesting after such particulars. Sometimes, however, the visionary has a nice hit at the theologian, and this shews some new facets of Rahner's character. He is shocked that St Catherine Ricci should see Savonarola as a prophet and martyr, and work for his beatification. He is not amused when Lucia of Fatima, on being told that something an angel had declared to her was 'theologically impossible', quietly replied, 'the angel may just not have studied theology'. Rahner gets his own back when Lucia is quoted as claiming the assistance of the Holy Spirit in writing down supplementary material twenty-five years after the event. This, he says, 'makes any further discussion difficult'.

Rahner is dissatisfied with the manualistic account of visions, an account which emphasises their private character and their lack of positive guarantee by the magisterium. He wonders how it is that something God reveals can be unimportant for the community, and if it be said that visions add nothing to the content of public revelation why does God employ visions to reveal these things 'instead of

leaving it to the sagacity of theologians to deduce them? Rahner distinguishes between new assertions and new commands. Prophecies appear to him existential as new commands from God, imperative for the Church in a concrete historical situation. Generally these commands are given to those who hold no teaching authority in the Church. Rahner has nothing to say of the belief of Pope John, surely vindicated in event, that the Holy Spirit had inspired his summoning of a Council. Certainly anyone may have a prophecy for the community, but Rahner's case does not seem all that good.

Rahner makes it clear that the Church is not infallible in the recognition of particular visions. The Catholic is always free to present a modest scepticism towards approved private revelations. And even if he accept a vision as from God, he ought to beware attaching a magic value to commands and promises. No promise has better warrant or more forceful terms than that of Christ: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood shall live for ever. But no one supposes that this is a guarantee of salvation unless supported by a Christian endeavour. These are self-evident truths, Rahner usually has more rewarding things to tell us.

Fr Faber finds himself amongst a strange crew (p. 72), and Fr Thurston gets an ambiguous mention (p. 78). The proof reading of note 9, page 11, leaves us with an anonymous reference. The title running up the spine of my copy has left its track. It is a pity that the first of this series to appear under this imprint should be such a bad buy. Could we not have some of those *Quaestiones* already published in the United States?

HAMISH SWANSTON

SPIRITUAL COUNSELS AND LETTERS OF BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL, edited with an introductory essay by Douglas V. Steere; Darton, Longman and Todd, 22s. 6d.

As the works of Friedrich von Hügel are now out of print this book is welcome, since it provides an insight, even though not a very satisfactory one, into the mind of one of the great modern thinkers of the Church. Nevertheless, both Douglas V. Steere's Introductory Essay and his selection leave much to be desired. Besides being written in almost unreadable English which out-Hügels von Hügel, the introduction gives only a very one-sided view of von Hügel's spirituality, culled mainly from his correspondence with the Anglican writer on mysticism, Evelyn Underhill.

The selection itself contains letters and fragments of letters to George Tyrrell, Maude Petre, his niece Gwendolyn Greene and others; Part Two gathers snippets from his works dealing with 'spiritual counsel'. They are arranged under titles such as 'The Life of Prayer', 'A Mixed Pasture of Prayer', 'All High Religion has Three Dimensions' and 'Philosophy and Religion: Man's Plumbline and God's Reality', taken mainly from *The Mystical Element of Religion, Essays and Addresses* and *The Reality of God*. These extracts, which range from one line spiritual *bon mots* to three page quotations, are particularly disappointing. They are not only