

such differences can be tolerated within sternly defined limits; and that they are patiently thrashed out during the course of centuries by theologians who are striving to think with the mind of the Church, which marks off Catholicism from Protestantism. To find how Catholicism and Protestantism differ in this way without delving into dogmatics (in other words, to appreciate the two atmospheres) one need only turn to Father Vetter's meditations upon how the Spirit renews the face of the earth. 'Love', 'Peace', 'Joy', 'Patience', etc., these are Father Vetter's themes. They are not new themes, nor do they lead to any great, critical, and original, standpoints. Occasionally a chapter brings home to the reader some aspect of our life in the Spirit which previously he had failed to appreciate—perhaps, for instance, the chapter on God's patience in dealing with us—but on the whole these meditations contain nothing startling, or nothing more startling than the source whence they are drawn, God's Word. That is why they make excellent spiritual reading for those who, first shocked by their own sinfulness on Good Friday and then divinely surprised on Easter Sunday, find it difficult to be startled at this late hour by the pronouncements of crisis theology. Catholics and Lutherans do breathe different atmospheres at present, but not, one prays, for always.

DONALD NICHOLL.

JACOB BOEHME (1575-1624). *Studies in his Life and Teaching*. By Hans L. Martensen (1808-1884), Primate Bishop of Denmark. Translated from the Danish by T. Rhys Evans. New revised edition. With notes and appendices by Stephen Hobhouse, M.A. Foreword by Canon Peter Green, D.D. (Rockliffe; 21s.)

If the many books now being published on the Gnostic heresies, the 'devil' literature and the best-selling novels on the problem of sin and evil are indicative of public taste, this fresh appearance of an old account of their origins should find a ready public. Although Boehme's unique and colourful theories are quite unacceptable to Catholics they seem to arouse interest in other quarters. Berdyaev, who considered Boehme to be 'the greatest mystic of all times', was of late years greatly influenced by his thought. Mr Hobhouse, himself a Quaker, testifies to Anglican and Quaker interest in him.

Boehme, whose system is complex beyond belief, was himself a simple soul. He was a Silesian cobbler, a Lutheran, peaceful, pious, a great reader of the Bible. In 1600, fascinated by sunlight falling on a pewter dish, he fell into some sort of religious rapture or trance, from which he recovered saying that he had seen things too wonderful to relate. Some years later, after a similar experience, came the urge to write down what he had seen. Hence came the *Aurora* or *Morning Redness* and later with outside help several weighty tomes which were published despite persecution from religious and civil authorities.

The complexity of his writings may be guessed when we realise that he claimed that the 'centres' of God and of Nature were opened to him. In a flash of illumination he saw into the innermost being of the Godhead, of heaven and hell, the earth, sin, mankind, judgment and more besides. Explanations and speculations upon these are inextricably mixed with asides and exhortations to the reader. Good round curses on pastors and devils combine with prayers for illumination and humility. His cramped style flavoured with alchemical and astrological terms does not make Boehme easy reading. He is nevertheless not without charm. His genuine piety and humility edify us, his love of flowers, his descriptions of angels and their activities are delightful. Turning his pages we have almost the sense of being out of doors, in deep forests shaken by tempests or in green and blossoming meadows.

Volumes of Boehme translated into English gave great support to the early Quakers and to William Law who assisted with the first complete edition of 1764. This was the work which influenced William Blake so powerfully. Few today would plough through these four great volumes. Those interested can read the excellent life of Boehme and precis of his teachings written by Bishop Martensen in 1883. It is this classic which Stephen Hobhouse has revised with notes and comments, as a companion to his William Law.

It is difficult to condense Boehme's teaching. Fundamentally he believed in the necessity of contrasts in order to have life and manifestation. 'In Yea and Nay, all thing consist'. God himself arises from an *Ungrund* or groundlessness in the depth of his own nature, through the clash of dark, primal Will or Wrath (the Father) and Light (the Son). These though essentially opposed meet and mingle (the Holy Ghost). This process is simultaneous and eternal, and is 'not to be understood in any creaturely manner of Time and Space'. It takes place in a darkness beyond the human distinctions of good and evil, being and non-being. In Nature which forms the Contrary to the Godhead both wills operate. Boehme compares the dark Will to a sap which 'boils up' and seeks to extinguish the Light. Angels are entirely of the Light, devils of the Dark. According to which Will man develops, so will be his eternal lot. Lucifer who developed his Dark will is irredeemable.

The process of the meeting of the Light and Dark principles are described by Boehme through seven stages involving, at first, anguish and strife. The idea of strife and tragedy at the heart of the Godhead profoundly influenced Berdyaev. Bishop Martensen regarded it as heretical, although he believed that the idea of the *Ungrund* and the dark Will have a deep psychological truth if applied to man. Mr Hobhouse commits himself to neither opinion. He is quite aware that Catholics cannot accept this, though he is at pains to remind us several times that Baader (1765-1841), professor of philosophy at Munich, a 'devout Roman Catholic', was nevertheless

a whole-hearted follower of Boehme and preached him to his students. But Baader, whom Mr Hobhouse also calls a theosophist, was also opposed to the idea of an eternal hell, which he (and Mr Hobhouse) regarded as the great blot on Boehme's teaching. Such was Baader's 'enlightened' Catholicism.

The doctrine of the *Ungrund* by no means exhausts Boehme's speculations. There is scarcely an article of the Apostle's Creed that he does not see in terms of Will and strife. Strained of most of its devotional and poetic contents and duly systematised by Martensen it makes clear if somewhat extraordinary reading. The book is pleasantly produced and Mr Hobhouse's notes and comments are useful and clear.

JANET CLEEVES.

TERTULLIAN'S TREATISE AGAINST PRAXEAS. The text edited, with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary, by Ernest Evans (S.P.C.K.; 21s.)

Although eulogistic accounts of any work always lead to a certain caution, we feel we cannot withhold our admiration for Dr Evans' book. Moreover his modesty prevents us from stressing deficiencies which he himself admits and explains. An edition and, even more valuable, a commentary on material of first importance handled with a scrupulous care all too seldom met with, deserve to claim attention. They provide us with more than a presentation of the text—with what is really tantamount to a chapter in the history of doctrine. And for those who do not allow themselves to be discouraged by the austere form of a commentary which is almost literal, such a presentation represents the safest formula, the one richest in suggestions, if not the most complete. Henceforward it will be possible to utilise Tertullian's important treatise without having to carve out a road for oneself before beginning. Lexicography, history, doctrine, nothing has been neglected. We cannot always agree with the author, but we owe him a great debt of gratitude for having given the material relative to any particular question *in extenso*. As Dr Evans has apparently decided to continue to give us the fruits of what has been the work of a lifetime, we have only one request: Could not this edition be followed by a complete index of the terms which figure in Tertullian's text? Again, we wonder whether the use of a book like that by Paul Monceaux would not have led to greater exactitude in the approach to the Scripture quotations. It would be interesting to trace Tertullian's theological language right back to the Greek, and the few suggestions which Dr Evans makes seem to us to indicate a fruitful line of approach. In any event, the present work deserves the greatest attention. Its accuracy does not give ground for hope that the author will find many imitators; it is none the less true that he has given a magnificent example.

HENRI DE RIEDMATTEN, O.P.