

sweet and divine reasonableness can we find in such and such a deed of God? This is a very different procedure from that of lesser theologies which too easily argue from how nice it would have been to therefore it must have been.

Such are a few pointers to the spirit that has presided over the writing of this Life of Christ. Let us conclude by asking, For whom was this Life written? The general reader will not appreciate Greek in the body of the text nor allusions to many matters of debate. The scholarly reader will perhaps boggle at what we have suggested, as at other points too. Still there is much positive information for the student, for the preacher in search of texts and ideas. Such as these may be helped by this book.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

PARACELSUS: AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL MEDICINE IN THE ERA OF THE RENAISSANCE. By Walter Pagel. (S. Karger, distributed in England by Basil Blackwell; 119s.)

John Donne, in his *Essays in Divinity*, those fascinating metaphysical disquisitions, speaks about the 'Paracelsian Phisick of the understanding'. To the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Paracelsus was indeed the prince of healers and the flower of natural philosophers. True, he excited much criticism also. But the enthusiasm for his teaching was so intense that it generated a whole Paracelsian literature after the sage's death. Yet at the present time Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, who wrote as 'Paracelsus', is hardly known to the public except from references by the poet Browning and by William Blake. This is a pity as he was a most remarkable figure whose pre-occupation with laboratory technique helped to turn men's efforts from alchemy to chemistry proper and who believed disease sprung from 'seeds' of living organisms, scattered about among healthy creatures like tares in the wheat. His judgment on syphilis and its treatment was sensible and accurate and he insisted on the power of the mind, or rather the imagination, over matter, in the whole range of medicine. A crank from one point of view, a genius from another, it was high time a serious study of his life and philosophy appeared.

Dr Walter Pagel has filled this need admirably. His book, presents a whole mental universe which is new to us and yet is the origin of our own. Like the scholars who have been working for the Warburg Institute, Dr Pagel fully understands the religious atmosphere of the age and the way in which scientific, or proto-scientific, speculation grew out of devotional enthusiasms. Paracelsus lashed out against both the Catholic and Protestant orthodoxies of the day. He felt that both Churches had compromised with the world in a disastrous way. But

he was a deeply pious man, at the same time. It is in his doctrine of Nature that this piety is most evident. He describes his own vocation in these words,

‘It behoves me to describe natural things so that many secrets may become known. Then may the physician prepare the fifth essence of gold and put to shame Avicenna the Sophist and his followers. Great are the virtues of Nature. Who is so thirsty as to work out all her virtues? For these are from God’s wisdom which is infinite.’

As Dr Pagel points out, Paracelsus believed that ‘Nature constitutes, however inadequately, a visible reflection of the invisible work of God. Nature has provided signs by means of which God has graced us with glimpses into his secret wisdom and “magnalia”.’

‘In matters eternal it is Belief that makes all works visible, in matters corporeal it is the light of Nature that reveals things invisible.’

Nevertheless, like many of the Renaissance figures affected by Ficinian Neo-Platonism—and Paracelsus admired Ficino as the type of the Priest-Physician—he ventured into a Pantheist position on some matters. The ‘virtues’ and ‘forces’ which Paracelsus saw informing all material things he took to be un-created, not natural but supernatural. Dr Pagel has clearly shown in the latter part of his book that Paracelsus’s ideas derive from Gnostic and Cabbalistic sources. He was the inheritor of Joachim of Fiore’s teaching and of the Lullian ‘Art’. All this combined with a shrewd common-sense, careful observation and an unusual gift of healing. A lucid key to Paracelsus’s sources, as well as to the strange terminology he used and which is so bewildering, is one of Dr Pagel’s most valuable contributions.

He makes no attempt to play down Paracelsus’s undoubted eccentricity, his violent quarrels, strange pride and aggressive temperament. But he does show that much of his originality is due to a refusal to compromise, a certain integrity. Paracelsus believed in travel, Nature’s book, and was as much at home in mining districts and mineral spas, which always fascinated him, as in universities. The journeyman scholar, the field surgeon, the inspired interpreter of Nature—all these aspects of Paracelsus are shown as parts of the whole picture. Perhaps his chief interest for us is that he was among the last splendid examples of men who never thought of separating Science and Religion, Nature and Faith.

DÉSIRÉE HIRST

THE MASS AND THE ENGLISH REFORMERS. By C. W. Dugmore. (Macmillan; 30s.)

The first half of this book is an elaboration of the thesis, first adumbrated by Batiffol, that there were in the Church of the fifth century two distinct theories concerning the Eucharist. The ‘materialist’