

and that his philosophy is as balanced a form of Christian philosophy as can be found. One may hope that this reprint of an early work may lead to a better appreciation of its value.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

THE HEART OF THE WORLD. By Dom Aelred Watkin. (Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

Although the author states that this book is not intended for professional theologians and controversialists, it is nevertheless a serious study of Christian doctrine, which re-presents theological teaching in a personal and original way while generally avoiding technical language.

Less directly concerned than is suggested by the publisher's blurb with devotion to the Sacred Heart, Dom Aelred's study is centred on the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Mystical Body, on all of which devotion to the Sacred Heart so closely depends.

The first section, which one would have liked to be further developed, is on 'The human heart and the Trinity', the heart being understood in the sense of 'that ultimate expression and experience of personality in knowing and loving'. Our Lord's mediation is specially emphasized: 'apart from Christ even the very centre of our hearts, where we are at our very best and highest, is cut off from knowing God'. This Christocentric emphasis is characteristic of the book: the growth of Eternal Life is seen as an all-round development in Christ through the sacraments, through suffering, through loving others, through the Liturgy and private prayer, which are all harmonious elements in our Christian re-formation.

The last section on 'the Law and the Heart' is the most developed one. The warfare of the Christian is ultimately one between selfishness and charity. Suffering and self-sacrifice are both the price and the means of the union between our hearts and the Heart of Christ. In these pages especially Dom Aelred is both personal and practical; and if he would be the last to claim that he has a new message, his fresh approach to and his union of various elements of the Christian life, which are sometimes too isolated from each other, help to make his book an ideal present for all religious, and for many thoughtful layfolk.

HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF DOM JOHN CHAPMAN. Edited by Dom E.R. Second Edition. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

For the fervent advocate of Dom John Chapman's spiritual doctrine there is in this highly personal work a well of abundant water. Here he is at his best and for those who knew him in life or have read his works there will be a new point of contact in this very natural exposé of his thought.

Dom Chapman never expected that one day his letters would be collected and published as a supplement to his personally edited writings. However, for those who are drawn to this virile Benedictine there will be much fruit for thought and clarification of ideas.

The source of his spiritual thought would seem to spring from the Benedictine spirit of liberty plus the influence of the Spanish Mystic St John of the Cross. His attraction is tradition in every respect. He draws from the Fathers, not excluding his holy Father St Benedict, and from the modern spiritual writers such as Saudreau, Lehodey and others. Had these letters been written for general consumption and edited by him personally some points would surely have been cleared up. Letters reveal a man as he is at his best and there is something about these letters that make up for the lack of a finished product. As a young priest he was sought out for direction and even in the midst of war we find him taking time out to help those who need personal direction. The influence of the great Jesuit de Caussade is very evident and that alone enriches the doctrine he sought to give.

The contents of the book are divided into three parts: letters to lay people, to religious and finally to a young Jesuit scholastic. In addition there is an appendix with a treatment of Contemplative Prayer and another on Mysticism. This new edition concludes with two more letters not previously published and well worth inclusion.

That Dom Chapman was a great scholar there can be no doubt; that he could have been clearer and more precise on some points is not to be denied, but we must remember that letters such as these were written to fill a specific need and consequently like any letter they serve only those to whom they were addressed or whose problems were similar.

In our day, even though there is a revival of interest in spiritual direction, there remain many souls who hunger for a more personal care and who definitely need special direction. It is not only in the cloister but out in the world that help of this type is so badly needed. For these souls, books often must be substituted for the lack of direction. It is to those Religious and Seminarians that we recommend this book. The letters would not perhaps fill this need for lay people, except in some cases, but they would be of incalculable help to those whose problems in the spiritual life find treatment in the letters of this great Priest of God.

RAYMOND J. CASEY, C.S.SP.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LOW COUNTRIES. By Stephanus Axters, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s. 6d.)

*La spiritualité des Pays-Bas*, by Fr Stephanus Axters, O.P., which was published at Louvain in 1948, has been translated by Donald Attwater