

Weil's *Waiting on God*). Throughout the book, as was to be expected, there is again the profound sense not only of the divine reality in itself but of the closeness of the love and pity of God. There are deep insights: as on 'the power to be unanxious, even about anxiety itself: the power to wait on God, and accept: the power to live in charity with all the evil or all the error that mars one', or again as in the analysis of marxist communism, which points out the essential evil, the abrogation of conscience in the name of conscience. On the other hand there are statements and points of view with which one cannot agree: to say, for instance, that only one set of people, one religious communion, can approach God is indeed 'stupid and arrogant—an outrage to the divine majesty'; but to imply, as this passage at least seems to imply, that one view of what God is like is as good as another is an outrage against truth. Again, the idea that 'the very meaning of physical death is that the body . . . is now irrelevant' is an 'outrage' against the God-given psycho-physical unity of the human personality and all that—in terms of human destiny—follows from it. But in all such cases as these the same thing strikes one as one reads: if the reasoning is not always valid, the intuition which the reasoning seeks to justify (in the above cases, the absolute need of reverencing other men's approach to God and its value in God's sight; the infinite pity which brought God down into the very depths of humanity's agonies and squalors) is always valuable and significant: being deeply thoughtful, the book is thought-provoking; but still more, being deeply felt, it invites a searching of the heart.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

LE PECHE ORIGINEL ET LES ORIGINES DE L'HOMME. By M. M. Labourdette, O.P. (Alsatia, Paris; n.p.)

The first part of this book is concerned with the dogma of original sin; the second with its theology according to St Thomas; the third with new problems. The question of man's antiquity worries people so little nowadays that it can be dismissed in less than a page. Even Père Teilhard de Chardin's dictum that man rises from the ape rather than descends from it will no longer provoke a storm. Yet difficulties remain and in attempts to solve them some have overstepped the bounds of orthodoxy. A subtle but heterodox view of original sin was beginning to insinuate itself into the Catholic schools of theology, at least before the appearance of the Encyclical *Humani Generis*. Claiming more accord with modern philosophy than the Tridentine one it taught that man, conscious of an inner conflict in his nature, by a process of naïve reflection projected into the past the idea of a single sin which had affected all mankind. To serve as a type of Christ no more was necessary than that Adam should have a 'literary' existence. While rejecting this view Père Labourdette does not deny that difficulties remain: notably that touching monogeny. The author wisely reminds us

that this word has not the same signification for the man of science and for the theologian. For the one it means descent from a single stock; for the other descent from a single pair. The second kind of unity may not have been formally defined as an article of faith but it remains inseparably bound up with Christianity. Its definition was under consideration at the time of the Vatican Council. The attempt to make of original sin a collective one the writer finds not free from ethical objections, and he has no use for preadamites who create more difficulties than they solve. We must await the acquisition of fuller knowledge before everything becomes clear. In view of the irritating way in which theologians have in the past neglected these questions, this book is by way of contrast refreshing to read.

HUMPHREY J. T. JOHNSON

L'ÉPÎTRE AUX HÉBREUX. Vol. I. Introduction. Par Père Spicq, O.P.
(Gabalda, Paris)

So large a volume devoted merely to introduction, with a similar volume for exegesis, seems to be a lack of proportion—until we remember that we are dealing with Hebrews, a work which has given endless trouble to biblical scholars ever since it was written. Who wrote it, and where, and when, and to whom? Its writer, contrary to the usual custom of St Paul to whom it is traditionally attributed, gives no clear indication on these points. In fact, what is the precise relationship of St Paul to the Epistle to the Hebrews? No solution of these problems during the past two thousand years has ever found general acceptance. And even if it had, there still would remain the formidable difficulties of interpretation. From the literary point of view alone, declares Père Spicq, no book of the Bible with the exception of the Apocalypse is so foreign to modern western mentality. That in itself is a good reason for so long an introduction, for we are more anxious to know what the book means than who wrote it, and when and where and to whom. But these things help to probe its meaning. If you want to get at the mind of the author you must study the *quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo* and *quando*. And you must study hard. There is no exegesis without tears any more than there is any philosophy without tears. It is of no use waiting for that easy translation of the Bible which will save you from all toil.

The labours and tears of Père Spicq, extended over many years, lead him to these conclusions: the author of Hebrews (the ascription is not original) is a converted Hellenistic Jew writing to encourage converted Jews, perhaps priests of the Mosaic dispensation, who through trials and weariness of spirit are in danger of apostasy. It is easy to sympathise with such men in the difficulties they find in exchanging their inborn religious and national traditions for the mustard-seed of Christian beginnings. But he reminds them that they are exchanging the splendid trappings of the Mosaic priesthood for the priesthood of Christ which is older and better.