

faith were haunted by fragmentary elements of holiness. By contrast Charles du Bos is presented as the man who consented to holiness. This book is highly informative about trends of thought in France, providing summaries and extensive quotations.

STANISLAUS PARKER, O.P.

LA THÉOLOGIE CATHOLIQUE AU MILIEU DU XX^E SIÈCLE. By Roger Aubert.

LE RÔLE DU LAICAT DANS L'ÉGLISE. By G. Philips. (Casterman; n.p.)

These two books are interesting additions to the excellent series of *Cahiers de l'Actualité religieuse* which already include the notable *Tolérance et communauté humaine*. The first and slighter of the two is based on three lectures given last year in Brussels, and in less than a hundred pages gives a succinct account of the tendencies apparent in Catholic theology over the last fifteen years, especially in the French-speaking countries. Quite rightly, M. Aubert sees this period as a turning point in the history of theology when Catholics are engaged in taking new bearings on the theologian's task and opening up new lines of investigation. The result is a great richness of original work, but at the same time a certain amount of confusion for those embarking on theological studies. The present book should prove an excellent aid for leading the latter into the heart of the theological debate and acquainting him with the four quarters of the contemporary theological world from which that debate is engaged.

Apart from covering most of the ground (one is surprised, however, that the name of Mersch does not occur in this book), M. Aubert is a well-balanced commentator. Nevertheless it is inevitable that a work of this kind should read occasionally like a publisher's catalogue, and that the reader should sometimes feel overwhelmed by so much commendation. A more definite statement of his own views would actually have added to the usefulness of this book. And while one must be grateful to the author for making us *au fait* with the latest developments, it must be admitted that the comparative absence of reference to St Thomas, whose position and authority in modern Catholic theology equals and surpasses that of St Augustine in the middle ages, could prove misleading.

The position of the laity in the Church is one of the themes discussed by M. Aubert, since both the revival of interest in the sources of theology and contemporary movements outside the Church have focussed the attention of the theologian upon it. M. Philips has written an excellent introduction to the whole question. Here again we have a fine example of how alive Belgian Catholicism is to the problems which face the

Church today, as to what is being currently written about them. This book is well-balanced, but gains from its concentration on one specific problem. And M. Philips, who writes with refreshing incisiveness and wit, does not shrink from making clear his own views and preferences.

Inevitably this book calls for comparison with Père Congar's *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc*. It is most interesting to note how both (although written independently of each other) follow practically the same plan: both after introductory chapters on the Church treat of the layman from the viewpoint of the three functions exercised by the Church of priesthood, government, and magisterium; and both have concluding chapters on the lay apostolate and lay spirituality. Nevertheless their treatment of the subject-matter differs. P. Congar, despite numerous *excursus* into historical and other details, is chiefly concerned with a theological elaboration of the layman's position in the Church, while M. Philips treats of that theology more briefly only to launch him into, and to guide him in, his main topic which is an evaluation of practical problems actually obtaining.

This is extraordinarily well done. At times an English reader may feel that the author is dealing with matters very remote from his surroundings. This is particularly so, perhaps, in the valuable chapter on Catholic Action. Clearly, on the Continent the whole notion of Catholic Action, as organised by Pope Pius XI and in the forms it took in various countries, is undergoing a crisis. Both theory and practice have been the object of much adverse criticism. Many have thought it had become outmoded. From M. Philip's careful analysis, however, it rather emerges that we should look on this stage as a *crise de croissance*. An English Catholic, consequently, may find much in what he writes to feed, not so much a somewhat sterile feeling of guilt for omissions in the past, as a hope that our more empirical temper may have some useful contribution to make once the first rather 'boy scout' stage of the lay apostolate has been passed and transcended with the help of the present-day barrage of criticism.

RONALD TORBET, O.P.

EARLY FATHERS FROM THE PHILOKALIA. Selected and translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer. (Faber and Faber; 35s.)

The *Philokalia*, originally compiled in Greek at the end of the eighteenth century, is certainly the best representative anthology of Eastern Christian spirituality. The present selection and translation is made from the greatly expanded nineteenth-century Russian version (the *Dobrotolubiye*). The editors' decision to include some additional writings on account of their relevance to others included in the volume is