

of grace, its historical development, and its personal implications. It is divided into two parts, which are entitled *Grace in its Essence* and *The Existential States of Grace*. This already sounds interesting, and a further look at the individual chapter and section headings would confirm this first impression. It must, alas, be said that the book moves from disappointment to disappointment. The first chapter on *Habitual Grace and the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost* tries to produce an air of actuality and contact; one is however left very much with a feeling that grace is just a 'thing' which is 'put' into the soul by God to do one good. The chapters that follow rise somewhat above this level, but wherever there is opportunity or occasion for the work to redeem itself and come to life, it sadly fails to do so. At times (as for example when faith, hope and charity are talked about in terms of time-sequence) it would seem to me to be positively unsatisfactory. With the second part one is once again brought to disappointment. 'Existential' is a loaded word these days; here the load has been shed, if indeed it was ever taken up, and one finds the same void. Ultimately one must say that this is simply 'manual-theology' watered down to a post-catechism, yet adult, level. There is great need for good theological writing at this level, which makes the book all the more disappointing. Those interested in this subject would do far better (both intellectually and financially) with *The Theology of Grace* by Jean Daujat in the *Faith and Fact* series.

GILES HIBBERT, O.P.

MARGARET ROPER. By E. E. Reynolds. (Burns and Oates; 16s.)

Margaret Roper's life could not be an easy one to write about. Anything as simple and unobtrusive as her personality we might easily fail to notice. Little is known about her, and nothing remarkable happened to her, personally. It is only in relation to her father that she becomes not only interesting, but important. This book wisely invents nothing (and how grateful one is to find no reconstruction of Old Chelsea with cries of Old London). We are given the meaningful sidelights when these are relevant: the German merchants in the steelyard, for instance, with their contraband Lutheran books. The picture of Margaret emerges, of course, largely in correspondence between her and her father. Once again we are dazzled by this wonderful Renaissance childhood, the sheer quality of the mental and spiritual atmosphere in which the More children were brought up. Almost the only thing comparable to it would be that of the young Bachs, living and breathing their daily music. We see something of the affluent days at Chelsea, and soon Margaret is quietly and unremarkably married. And then quite suddenly there is the dénouement, the oath, the Tower, and the extreme intimacy of father and favourite daughter

shadowed for a time by her inability to comprehend his stand against the king. One forgets, until Mr Reynolds makes the point, that Margaret's was the typical contemporary view. Her father's sacrifice seemed so absurd that it looked for a while as if she were going to be unable to understand why he must make it. Eventually the principle was as clear to her as it was to him, that there was to be no dictation to anyone else's conscience. Having accepted that, she could make her sacrifice of him. Once the tension was resolved, their understanding of each other found a new depth. Their two characters are never more clear to us than at the final parting.

More has justifiably been considered to belong at the very summit of English spirituality, and in this connection one can recall how Paul Renaudin put his finger on precisely what constitutes the Englishness of the tradition which More epitomizes . . . 'Besoin, non seulement de solitude, mais d'indépendance: l'individualisme de la race s'est manifesté là comme ailleurs.' There is never any question that More consulted a spiritual director about the stand he took, since obviously there was no one on whom he could depend. 'There is no man living, of whom while he liveth, I may make myself sure.' All the clergy were weak and shortsighted, he concluded, with an utterly saintly compassion and lack of bitterness.

The great merit of this book is that here we have hagiography writing itself, father and daughter composing a spiritual testament to comfort one another. It is a deeply moving book. The passages from More's work and his correspondence with Margaret are chosen with such perception that we are given a treasury of vintage More that adds considerably to our appreciation of an imposing, vivid and lovable character. One feels that Margaret would have approved of the author's achievement entirely, since it focuses our attention on her father rather than on herself. Nonetheless, that particular focus is something that only she could provide, which is why this book really does give us something new.

GEOFFREY WEBB

THE AGE OF MARTYRS. By Giuseppe Ricciotti, trans. Anthony Bull, C.R.L. (Geoffrey Chapman; 24s.)

Abbot Ricciotti's *Era dei Martiri* is a book that achieves something which had always seemed unlikely. The ground of Christian antiquity, covered by endless dreary manuals, could conceivably be transmuted by an author with a really personal grasp of a wide variety of sources, to such an extent that the subject would seem no longer remote, but