

LEON BLOY, PILGRIM OF THE ABSOLUTE. A selection of his writings edited by Raissa Maritain. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 18s.)

This English edition of an American compendium will provide a good introduction to Léon Bloy. He suffers less than most authors from selection. His novels have a limited interest as works of fiction, and what is important in Bloy is most often the aside, the meditation on a text. No one is better qualified than Madame Maritain to edit such a book, and here, conveniently arranged, are extracts from the major works—especially from the *Exégèse des Lieux Communs*, *Le Mendiant Ingrat*, *La Saut par les Juifs* and the Journals. One might have expected a more generous selection from Bloy's letters, which—freed as they are from the discipline of literary forms with which he was not often at ease—reveal his mind most faithfully. Jacques Maritain's introduction (drawn from *Quelque pages sur Léon Bloy*) completes the value of the book. It is unlikely that Bloy will ever be fully translated into English, and, for those unable to read him in all the prodigality of his works, Madame Maritain's judicious anthology provides sufficient material for judgment.

I. E.

THE UN-MARXIAN SOCIALIST: A Study of Proudhon. By Henri de Lubac, S.J. Translated from the French by Canon R. E. Scantlebury. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

Of all the apostles of liberty in the last century Proudhon is one of the most enigmatic. 'A man of paradoxes', an un-Marxian Socialist (to use Père de Lubac's telling phrase if somewhat inept title), he stands open to a mass of interpretations. In July, 1945, Professor J. Selwyn Schapiro published an article in *The American Historical Review* under the title of 'Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism' in which, taking as his cue one of the collaborationist papers which had cited some of Proudhon's dictums with obvious approval, the author set out to show by quotation how plausible a case might be made out for seeing this Frenchman as one of the progenitors of Hitlerism. Later Mlle Madeline Amoudrux redressed the balance with *Proudhon et l'Europe* which, although confined mainly to Proudhon's writings on European affairs, did as well embrace much else that is not only fundamental, but paramount for a full understanding of his ideas. It is in the steps of Mlle Amoudrux that Père de Lubac follows; much of what she said he consolidates in greater detail, and against a broader and more general background—the background of the nineteenth century—he puts forward his interpretation of Proudhon's dialectic. With a man of so many phases, diverse moods and contrasting attitude the task can have been no easy one and it is some measure of Père de Lubac's success to say that a consistent and clear portrait does emerge: even more a measure of his success is it to say that his study opens up many side issues which if not answered fully there, do at least prompt

further researches. In the best sense of the term, his book is one long adventure in search of the polymorphous nature of truth.

'Writing, always writing! Who will deliver me from this hell?' All the time, constantly and without respite, Proudhon was being driven on. Hardly were the pages dry and he was off again on a new thesis; hardly were the paragraphs of one section dry and he was off again on a new series of ideas. Every sentence was tangential and no conscious heed could be given either to fine writing or carefully planned cadences. 'I look upon literature as a little girl's plaything'—although, as Jacques Valdour said of him, when a thought went into his head he had an apoplectic fit of eloquence. Far from his mind was any hint of Bohemianism, but, as Père de Lubac points out, despite his scorn of the literary chatterboxes of his day, his prose was that of 'an accomplished man of letters'. It was in his nature to work fast, and a year before his death, having exhausted himself over a book 'which should have demanded at least six months' reflection', in a letter to his friend, Bergmann, he made his own defence: 'I was wrong, you will say. I should have let them bawl and taken the time to turn out a good book. . . . But you are well aware that a pregnant woman cannot choose either the hour or the moment. She brings forth the child wherever she may be and as best she may. . . . That was my case: the child will be worth what it may; I had to go on'. So it was until the very end he poured out his beliefs and changes of opinion, barely pausing for a reply. Sometimes his ideas were brilliant, sometimes they were downright stupid, but he had to go on: the pace that he set was hard and it is to Père de Lubac's credit that he not only keeps abreast, but now and again darts ahead. The biographer in this case is no second string, but one fully matched for every twist and turn of the course.

Already before 1848 Proudhon had declared that those who had been most fruitful to his ideas were 'the Bible first of all, then Adam Smith, and lastly Hegel'. The order is significant because it stresses that gnawing desire for perfect Justice with which Proudhon's main concern lay and in defence of which he often sharpened his own arguments by taking texts from the Bible; but it should be noticed that these texts usually came from the Old Testament, that they favoured the God of Revenge rather than the God of Love, since for Proudhon Justice could not be equated with Charity. When Justice became too tempered by love in human relationships he believed it suffered a degradation and that consequently human arbitration became law, only shortly to become pure and simple tyranny. As far as it went his process of thought was logical, but as Père de Lubac goes on to show, at the very moment when Proudhon thought he had made Justice supreme it was merely to discover that it was 'insufficient and ineffective' because it had to 'call on other strength, a higher grace'. Try as he might he could not eliminate the doctrine of original sin, for always at the last he knew that 'the fight with God is never-ending'. In contrast to Marx he believed that man was

not sufficient unto himself and, realising the impossibility of a Socialist Utopia, he was prepared to meet life on its own terms; he knew that man's thoughts go further than it is given him to reach and, remembering that Jacob's tussle with the angel had ended with a heavenly victory, he was prepared to admit that weakness which is both the greatness and littleness of man. The wheel was beginning to turn full cycle again and at his death his ideas were nearer those of Pascal than Auguste Comte. He was proof 'that man cannot say farewell for ever to metaphysics and theology'.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE.

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIFE OF MAN. By Cyril C. Clump, S.J. (Catholic Social Guild; 4s.)

Although study-circles have been assiduously working at the encyclicals for many years, even occasionally following a course in social science, they have not apparently taken very readily to economics and politics. This very full survey may encourage them to extend their interests. The familiar headings of the economic text-books are replaced by titles likely to arouse more enthusiasm among students who are immediately concerned with concrete problems, but all the essential topics are covered. The purist may wince at the juxtaposition of the moral problem of the just price and the economic theory of value, but this is a study of the whole man and sooner or later even the economist has to go beyond the strict limits of his science to pass a moral judgment.

The book can be recommended then to the student or the general reader, but its greatest value will be in the hands of the leader of a study-circle who has himself gone through the discipline of a more systematic course of economics and political science. To him more than others will be apparent the meaning of some of the hastily summarised theories, and he will be able to stimulate research and use the bibliography with discretion. The aids provided by Fr Clump are excellent, but the independent spare-time student may find a recommendation to read Carlyle on 'The Modern Worker' rather abrupt and will probably find J. E. Meade's *Economic Analysis and Policy* too difficult for his unguided research.

EDWARD QUINN

LOST PROPERTY. By Paul Derrick. (Dobson; 8s. 6d.)

An interesting and intelligent contribution to the 'Dobson library', though some of Mr Derrick's proposals may be anachronistic by the time this review appears. The author brings forward his proposals for the distribution of property in an industrial age. The various chapters deal with such questions as industrial democracy, the problems of incentives and economic security, the preservation of private property, the meaning of ownership, and the standard of living.