

Father Rice's book is of special importance because, where the workings of the spirit and where doctrinal issues are concerned, his vocation and the training it has brought him do ensure that he knows the nature of what he is handling. What a boon to the student is this fine distillation of years of reading in the texts and poetry of Persian and Arab exponents of their unusual spiritual experiences, and how much greater is it for the irenic and yet thoroughly objective way in which it is written! He gives the answers to questions which the serious, as opposed to the dilettante or obscurantist, student might ask. Take for example the vexed question of *fanā*, the Sūfis' objective of 'annihilation' in God, with the concomitant suspicion of pantheism *et cetera*: 'Above all, it is one's own self that has to be forgotten, renounced, outpassed. . . . This does not mean the elimination or destruction of the human personality. Indeed, the human personality *must* survive if it is to keep up this never-ending act of adoration and self-transcendence. It survives, one might say, rather as hydrogen or oxygen survive in water, by a sort of virtual substantiality. Henceforth, the life of the self is to live in and for

another . . . ' Assuredly after this any genuine Sūfi would declare that this author had certainly 'arrived', traversed the stages, the valleys and mountain-tops of the Way.

As for the host of non-genuine abusers of the Sūfi Path and its habit, they form no part of Father Rice's business and must be relegated to the works of those more interested in the purely social and political aspects of societies than the religious. The works of Father Rice and Professor Arberry are essential for the historian who should now be at hand to discuss what kind of social conditions were conducive to Sūfism's rich development in medieval Persia and what this development in the end did to, or for, Persian and Muslim society. But in an age of concentration mainly on the fluctuations of the saliva content in a creature's mouth and the state of the pupils in the devotee's eyes, the clarity of exposition Father Rice has accorded to Sūfism, purely as a spiritual quest and a way of life practising love and inculcating humanity and patience, is welcome and refreshing.

P. W. Avery

MARTIN LUTHER, a Biographical Study by John M. Todd, *Burns and Oates 30s.*

There are several close parallels, between the careers of Martin Luther and John Wesley. Both began their work as devout members of their respective Churches, and in both these churches spiritual life was at a low ebb, not wholly moribund, but with much in the way of torpor, distortions of truth and abuses of custom, that badly needed reform. Both men started their ministries by new insights into the gospel, that were denied or negated by religion as it was commonly presented and practised around them. Both set their world alight with new life by their preaching

and both, in the end, were forced by circumstances, and without explicit intention to create a breach in their parent bodies, which resulted in the formation of wholly new churches to add to the divisive tendencies of an unregenerate Christendom.

Mr John Todd has written (1958) *John Wesley and the Catholic Church*, a biography which underlines the ecumenical aspects of Wesley's life and work. This led him to undertake the task of doing the same for Martin Luther, and with equal or even greater success, especially from

that particular point of view.

Catholics can be detached about Wesley and Wesleyanism, it is not so easy for us to be detached about Luther. He was dealt with in the nineteenth century by the German historian Father Denifle, O.P., from judgments on evidence to be little less than a rogue. That verdict has since been gradually modified and the judgment of the contemporary Catholic historian Dr Joseph Lortz sees him as a great reformer *manqué*.

For Catholics there is always the awkward fact that Luther became technically an apostate who defied the Church's authority and wrecked the unity of Christendom in the West. Is it possible for a good man to be presented, in day to day life, with such a caricature of the Church, from its highest representatives, Pope and Bishops, down to its local manifestations in the parish and presbytery, that he loses sight, with excusable completeness, of its true image and becomes obsessed with a false one? In this process, slowly and painfully, in face of the resistance of entrenched abuse, he comes to exaggerate his true insights till they become error, and is led by sincere conscience to reject the Church's divine authority.

Yet at the same time the authority of Christ and his gospel, as he sees it in the New Testament, becomes paramount in his life and work.

That is what happened to Luther in the analysis here presented of his life and work. Mr Todd sets out the facts with impartiality and gives his judgments with studious fairness. He does not over-magnify the undoubted abuses and corruptions in the Church, but he shows Luther's dynamic personality and character in conflict with static resistance to the need of drastic reform.

And out of it all came the Reformation, with its mixed good and evil. Mr Todd would not claim that his book is perfect but he has read widely, thought deeply and written conscientiously and attractively. Dr Hans Küng has said of it: 'He who would understand the modern Catholic Church must understand the Reformation. He who would understand the Reformation must understand Luther'. This book can certainly be recommended to all educated Catholics, clergy and laity, who are eager to engage seriously in the near future in the dialogue with other Christians.

Henry St John, O.P.

THAW AT THE VATICAN. The Second Session of the Vatican Council by Bernard Wall and Barbara Wall, *Gollancz 28s.*

REPORT FROM ROME II. The Second Session of the Vatican Council by Yves Congar, O.P., translated by Lancelot Sheppard, *Geoffrey Chapman 5s.*

COUNCIL SPEECHES OF VATICAN II. A selection edited by Yves Congar, O.P., Hans Küng and Daniel O'Hanlon, S.J., *Sheed and Ward (Stagbooks) 6s.*

SHEPHERD OF MANKIND. A biography of Pope Paul VI by William E. Barrett, *Heinemann 25s.*

Comment on the Vatican Council in English has so far come from Americans, and their books – lively, alert and full of coffee-bar tales – have scarcely troubled to conceal their hopes and fears. Mr and Mrs Wall, who would presumably agree to stand up and be counted as 'progressives', none

the less provide a remarkably objective summary of the debates of the second session. Mr Wall provides the introductory chapters, which place the Council in the context of the Church's response to Pope John's appeal for a spiritual renewal and a sincere confrontation with the