

criticism right. If one compares *Tosca* with *Butterfly* in the first case, Puccini's sado-masochism is merely a point of entry, in the second, it is the *raison d'être* of the whole enterprise. *Tosca* works, *Butterfly* does not. Much more seriously the same limitation prevents him from doing justice to *Tristan*. He mentions with approval a production of *Tristan* that makes King Mark Tristan's father, not his uncle. In the first place, this does grave violation to the text. In Tristan's great scene in the third act he explicitly relates the haunting theme played off-stage by the cor anglais for most of the Prelude to the occasion *als einst dem Kind des Vater's Tod verkundet* and the later occasion when he learnt that his mother had died in giving birth to him. It is unambiguously clear that he is the child the father's death was announced to. This is not a mere plot detail but part of a scene that lays bare the very considerable psychological subtlety that informs the opera. Although Wagner wrote before the psychoanalytic revolution he certainly anticipated it. *Tristan* is not an *Oedipus Rex*: it is an opera whose psychology is rooted in the emotions of childhood and an oedipal situation may in part be the source of those emotions. But just as while all or most human beings experience such a situation in greater or lesser degree, the later effects of this trauma take many different forms. Isolde is not a mother figure for Tristan but the focus of an overmastering sexual passion. The opera is remarkable because of the insight it offers into such a situation: to assign it to a simple category, a mere manifestation of an oedipus complex, is to do scant justice to what is offered. Likewise it is obtuse of Father Swanston to say that the plot in any way turns on the love potion. The lovers are hopelessly in love before the potion is ever mentioned. Isolde intends to

give Tristan poison. He is perfectly aware of what she would be at and will still take it: she proposes to finish off the same poison. It is Brangane who substitutes the love potion. The effect of the love potion is to make credible the swift dropping of inhibitions and move the drama along—it is enormously long already. In any case as Tristan points out the ingredients of the love potion are again psychological. It is brewed he says 'from father's grief and mother's woe'.

There is, of course, much more that is right with the book. I think Father Swanston is at his best on Mozart. He has dropped the 'explanation' of the plot of *Così* he offered in his article. I think he finds it difficult to accept that the very strong element of the ridiculous in the opera is perfectly compatible with high seriousness. He finds *Don Giovanni* unsatisfactory: it isn't easy to fault Mozart and I am not sure his perceptions are right here. He would include *Idomeneo* in the classic canon and I suspect he is not merely right but prophetic. His whole discussion of Mozart is quite superb.

There are odd slips. I hope he will pardon my pedantry in pointing out that Charlemagne was no more the ancestor of Don Carlos than he was of Father Swanston. Nicolai Gedda is not Italian. Caruso made a great many more records than the early wax cylinders Father Swanston is so dismissive about. He was the first recording artist to sell a million records and he established the gramophone as a serious source of musical experience in the process. In the opinion of people who heard him the later records are a remarkably faithful memorial of his voice. Much more important, anyone who likes going to the opera should buy this book and read it immediately if not sooner.

ERIC JOHN

SOUL FRIEND. A Study of Spirituality, by Kenneth Leech. *Sheldon Press, London, 1977 pp. 250 £3.95.*

I am sure that the editor of *New Blackfriars* would agree with me, but there is some value in writing reviews late. The zealous, punctual reviewer may rub his crystal-ball and prophesy that Dan Stupitt's *Ongoing Scenario of In Depth De-*

mythologization Situations will become a classic, or not, as the case may be. The one-year-late man, on the other hand, has this advantage: he replaces prediction with statement of fact. I can do that in this case. For many people Ken Leech's *Soul*

Friend has already, only a year after its publication, proved itself to be an invaluable introduction to the subject of spiritual direction and indeed to Christian spirituality as a whole.

Fr Leech is already well known as the author of *Youthquake*, a study of the revival of interest in religion among young people at the end of the 60s. The first chapter of *Soul Friend* begins with a recapitulation of the earlier book and concludes firmly: 'Never was spiritual direction more urgently called for than in the present climate of soul searching' (p.33). At a time when so many clergymen claim to be confused about their 'role', here is an exhilarating proclamation of the centrality of spiritual fatherhood to the priestly vocation.

In addition to providing a breathtakingly comprehensive survey of spiritual direction through the centuries, *Soul Friend* is also an excellent, practical introduction to prayer, with sane and simple advice on distractions, Bible-reading as a preparation for prayer, the 'prayer of the body', and much more. There is a masterly discussion of the traditional 'Three Ways' (p. 157) and one of the most succinct summaries I have read of St John of the Cross's doctrine of the dark night of the soul (pp. 160 ff).

In a short compass *Soul Friend* achieves a great deal. I will mention just two achievements. First, it witnesses to and exemplifies the spiritual necessity of Catholic orthodoxy.

The defence of orthodoxy is often portrayed as an exercise in polemics and intellectual debate, while the devout soul, unconcerned with and unaffected by such controversies, seeks God in the pathways of the Spirit where dogmatic disagreements have no place. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The Fathers draw the closest connection between dogma and

spirituality (p. 154).

In Fr Aelred Squire's phrase, Fr Leech 'asks the Fathers' and demonstrates the astonishing pertinence of their answers.

Secondly, *Soul Friend* shows the prophetic nature of Christian spirituality. In a final chapter, which explores the interconnection of prayer and politics, Fr Leech attempts to justify the magnificent statement of Father Faber: 'Now spiritual direction, simply regarded as a fact, is a witness against the world, and we commit ourselves to its testimony' (cited on p. 187. Incidentally, it is to be hoped that this quotation, together with a short discussion of Faber's *Growth in Holiness*, will contribute to the rehabilitation of a great spiritual writer too often assumed to be no more than a sentimental hymnographer.)

Soul Friend has its shortcomings. Quoting from such a varied collection of authors Fr Leech inevitably paints with such a broad sweep of the brush that fine detail is lacking. Too often he becomes dependent on text-book generalizations about periods and authors. For example, he regrets the influence of 17th century spirituality on the Catholic revival in the Church of England in the 19th century, because the former was characterized by 'individualistic piety and active rationalism' and, by implication, a neglect of contemplative prayer. In fact, the School of Père Lallemand, which via J. J. Surin influenced Dr Pusey during the darkness of the mid-1840s, was characterized by its fidelity, in the face of some opposition, to the teaching of the great Carmelites on contemplation.

These, however,, are minor quibbles. *Soul Friend* is an excellent primer in spirituality and should be on the shelves of every Christian, clerical or lay. The trouble is, reviewing so late, I am sure you know this already.

JOHN SAWARD