

conditions. Yet despite the corrections one would like to see made, one feels that the members of the still vocal Church ought to read and to ponder this report about the silent Church.

C.V.

MASTERY AND MERCY: A Study of Two Religious Poems. By Philip M. Martin. (Oxford University Press; 15s.)

Canon Martin's study of *The Wreck of the Deutschland* and *Ash Wednesday* is written for people 'without specialist knowledge', for Christians chiefly who might not normally read these poems—or possibly any poems—at all. 'My aim was not only to open to people the pure enjoyment of the poetry itself, but also that the deep Christian truths expressed imaginatively by the two poets might be allowed to strike deep into souls.' Literary criticism, he would claim, is largely concerned with pure enjoyment and is suspicious of a 'committed' standpoint; but though these are both 'committed' poems (i.e. written 'from within the Church'), it seems to me that they lose almost as much by being considered, as here, simply from the religious point of view without much reference to their life as poems: criticism of this kind is bound to be rather one-dimensional. *Ash Wednesday*, in particular, suffers from being over-simplified in terms of a rather narrow orthodoxy: it is a far more ambiguous poem, and meant to be, than Canon Martin's rather bowdlerized version would allow. And is it telling us much to say, for instance, that Hopkins 'must have lain and looked with love at the breaking waves'?

But probably Canon Martin would agree with all this; after all, it is only to say that any poem analysed down into prose gets desiccated in the process. What matters about this book is that it really does help us to understand these poems, and poetry, as the author so rightly insists, is important for the Christian as a means of bringing truth to his imagination and affections as well as to his mind. If the best thing to do after reading this charmingly humble book is to forget about it and go and read the poems again, Canon Martin will surely feel that this is what he wanted.

H.O'D.

A PATH THROUGH GENESIS. By Bruce Vawter, C.M. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof. It has been the reviewer's good fortune to be able to study the impact of this book on two educated laymen. Both were captivated by it, and neither was willing to drop it before getting to the end; which is more than can be said of most non-fictional writing.

So, at last, we have in English an introduction to and brief but useful commentary on the first and basic book of the Bible. Here is a 'path through Genesis' which we can thoroughly recommend as a beginning. The whole text is examined, section by section; and the text printed and commented on is that of the 'Confraternity Version', perhaps the most effective and accurate English translation of Genesis available at this time. In this way, too, we are made to sense the primacy of the text itself. We are not just talking about the Bible, but rather throwing light on the text which is always before us and written for our salvation.

After a thoughtful and necessary introduction on the interpretation of the Bible in general and Genesis in particular in the light of Catholic principles, we are then presented with the whole matter of Genesis in three sections. The primitive narratives, or Genesis I-II, are presented as 'The meeting of God and Man'. This is the theological, and so the soundest, viewpoint. Then we are given the patriarchal period down to Jacob or Israel, under the heading of 'Hebrew Beginnings'. This it was; both as regards God's designs in the inward development of his chosen people, and also because the Hebrew peoples first enter the stage of Near Eastern history, as it can be known, at the time of the early Patriarchs. Part Three is not so convincingly constructed. The story of Jacob is most fully written up, and the story of Joseph accounts for that sojourn in Egypt which was the necessary preliminary to Exodus. But the Exodus itself and the leadership of Moses were the next real beginning. Universal Jewish tradition has always sensed this, and Christian tradition too, because the Exodus is the classic type of our redemption.

However, our author had to divide up his matter—like Gaul—into three parts. More important is the fact that a path through Genesis has been traced. Next must come a book which will make this path into a well-lighted high-road, or, in other words, a full-blown Catholic commentary on Genesis, as up-to-date as in accord with the mind of the Church.

In the meantime, let us use the path to lessen that ignorance of Scripture which is not to the credit of English-speaking Catholics.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.