

TRAITE DU BAPTEME. By Tertullian. Text, introduction and notes by R. F. Reffoué, o.p. French translation by M. Douzy, o.p. (Sources Chrétiennes No. 35; Cerf and Blackfriars.)

Tertullian was already in his forties when he wrote this treatise on Baptism sometime between 200 and 206 A.D. He was attacking an extreme Gnostic sect as well as preparing neophytes for the sacrament, and he was still keenly aware of the Church as the Mother of the faithful. He concludes the treatise by urging the catechumens when they are re-born of this new Mother to beseech the Father and Lord to pour forth his 'charisms' upon themselves and to remember the 'sinner Tertullian' when they so pray. Later he broke away from his 'Mother's' home; but here he speaks with earnest orthodoxy of this new birth, this liberation from the power of the devil, this entry into the kingdom of heaven. In a most informative introduction to this edition Père Reffoué shows the two symbolismes that Tertullian draws upon: the natural symbolism of water as the principle of fecundity, shown when the spirit brooded over the waters and leading to the conception of baptism as regeneration; and the biblical symbolism of the waters of destruction as seen in Exodus leading to the idea of baptism as liberation. The text, the original of which appears opposite the French translation, also abounds with allusion to the primitive liturgy of initiation. Tertullian, for example, draws a sharp contrast between the pomps and ceremonies (still referred to in our present baptismal rite) of the pagan and mystery religions and the simplicity of the function of plunging the catechumen into the font. This study, then, not only gives us easy access to the earliest work on Christian baptism; it also provides, with the help of the illuminating introduction and useful notes, a most instructive work on the nature of the sacrament and the meaning of its sacramental rites.

C.P.

THE STORY OF THE ROSARY IN PROSE AND VERSE, as produced by Alan Rye. (Ditchling Press; 1s.)

For those who were able to be present at the Wembley Rally, this book will provide a welcome and permanent reminder of the Rosary Pageant. To read at leisure the text of a drama once seen is always a pleasure; to be able to read and ponder the well-chosen lines which describe the fifteen mysteries of the rosary can be not only a happy reminiscence, but a real aid to the better praying of the rosary itself. For those who did not see this pageant, this book, with its clear illustrations, may give some hint of what was missed. Better still, if it inspires parishes, guilds and smaller groups to attempt something similar, though perhaps on a more domestic scale, this book will be, not a memorial to something past, but a step towards greater understanding and love of the rosary.

R.B.H.