

theological errors which still occasionally find their way into spiritual writings more inspired by someone's favourite devotion than balanced in their underlying doctrine. The author shows clearly the importance, not only for the sake of excluding unnecessary difficulties for non-Catholics, but even more for the sake of the truth of the Incarnation, of careful and prudent expression. It is particularly gratifying to see that Fr Congar takes the opportunity to castigate the view, occasionally unfortunately expressed, that our Lady can in some way be more merciful or more approachable than our divine Lord.

It is, finally, a treat to read a French book so impeccably translated as this. It is a useful addition to our ecumenical literature.

H. FRANCIS DAVIS

THE LIBRARY OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICS. Vol. V. Early Latin Theology, Ed. by Professor S. L. Greenslade. Vol. X. A Scholastic Miscellany. Professor A. M. Fairweather. (S.C.M. Press Ltd., each vol. 30s.)

The continuing publication of the Library of Christian Classics is one more piece of evidence that there is an increasing interest in Anglo-America in patristic writings and also perhaps that a decreasing number are able to read them in the original. Ignorance of Latin is less disastrous in the study of the scholastics than in that of those great and very individual stylists the Latin Fathers. The scholastics in volume X remain recognizably scholastic. In volume V there is little to suggest the quality of the Latin prose in Professor Greenslade's always accurate and not infrequently pedestrian translations.

In other ways also volume V is the more disappointing of the two. Partly this may be because of the promise of its title and the known distinction of its editor. It contains nothing from St Hilary of Poitiers or from Lactantius or from the author of the *De Trinitate*, or from Arnobius or from Minucius Felix. It contains very little theology either in the modern, medieval or patristic sense. The extracts deal primarily with some ideals of Christian life and some conceptions of the Church and of its relations with the civil power. It consists of some very characteristic passages from the writings of St Cyprian and of excerpts from Tertullian at his least significant, St Jerome at his least attractive, and from St Ambrose at his least inspired.

The title of volume X, 'A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham', is an accurate enough description. It is a miscellany. It begins with Anselm, it ends with Ockham, and it consists of excerpts from scholastics if the term is used widely enough to include John of Salisbury. But it is hard to find any principle on which the miscellany has been constructed. It seems in fact to be three quite different books. The first and the most valuable consists of a selection from the writings of St Anselm, well chosen, carefully and accurately translated, with a

good bibliography and useful notes. The second consists of excerpts from Ivo of Chartres, Gratian, John of Salisbury, Anselm of Laon, Abailard, Lombard and the Victorines, usually exasperatingly brief and often, it would seem, chosen at random. No one who cares for the *Policraticus* or the *Benjamin Minor* could read this section without poignant regrets for lost opportunities. The last section seems almost a rather unfair caricature of the whole series with St Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and William Ockham crowded together in about fifty pages and Ockham's thought only represented from his *Quaestiones de Potestate Papae*.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

CONFESSIONS. Unpublished Sonnets of Racine translated into English verse by Walter Roberts. (Mowbray; 13s. 6d.)

These sonnets, 108 in number, have been ascribed to Jean Racine and are said to have been written in his last years in exile from the court of Louis XIV. In his Introduction, Mr Martin Jarret-Kerr says of the translation that it is 'felicitous, and retains something of the sincerity and deep feeling of the originals . . .'. But these are purely literary considerations and are best left to the connoisseurs of French literature.

The sonnets are described as 'a religious poem', the work of a sick man conscious that his end is near and humbly preparing himself to meet his God. The drama of the final conversion of a deeply religious man who is, besides, a literary genius of the highest order is an experience in which readers of *THE LIFE* would want to share. The sonnets, however, according to Mr Roberts 'show him (Racine) in an acute condition of anguish worthy of the utmost flight of his tragic imagination'. But anguish for what? Taken at its face value this poem is the outpourings of a man sick in mind and body, tortured by religious doubts and scruples, bitter beyond words at being dismissed his post through the betrayal of his friends and family. He abases himself under the avenging hand of God, spares himself no opprobrium, waits in patience for the healing favour of justification. Thinking on the injustice of his position and foreseeing that his treacherous friends might reap the advantage of his downfall, he calls on heaven to smite them and destroy them utterly. And finally, hoping perhaps that all is not irrevocably lost, he fawns and flatters the King, whose judgment is right in spite of the lies and deceits of those around him.

The religious genuineness of Racine's death and the final outcome of his salvation are not—needless to say—matters to be judged one way or the other from these sonnets.

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