

him a sign from heaven, to put him to the test. And with a profound sigh he said, 'Why does this generation demand a sign?'

I do not know why a profound sigh is more dignified than a sigh that comes straight from the heart: the only other change is an importation from other versions of the obscure "put him to the test". The first quoted sentence of both pieces is irretrievably undignified, as well as wrong, for "have a discussion with" is only vaguely like the Greek original.

Well, perhaps the value is in the Introduction and Notes, and perhaps that is why a new edition was thought necessary and why yet another new one is hinted for about a quarter of a century hence.

The Introductions are certainly treated typographically as the main things, for they actually get bigger type than the Word of God. I am afraid the one I shall quote is just an editorial-cum-priestly defusing of the Bible. The Song of Songs, it is confessed, is no longer generally interpreted as allegory, though that interpretation is still possible. "In its own way," we are uneasily told, "it teaches the excellence and dignity of the love that draws man and woman together, it ... presents a love as free of puritanical restraint as it is of licentious excess." The book is made to sound positively cosy, a process aided by the translation. Bowels are not mentionable, we have the core of the being instead.

The new version is said to have been made necessary by new scholarship. But the new scholarship is at least incomplete. From the press handout or the editorial matter in the book itself you would never suppose that any serious public criticism of the old JB had ever been made. In fact it is very extensive and not uninfluential in the world.

I will not now repeat the arguments about the necessary difficulties facing any modern translator of the Bible: I have no reason to suppose that they would get any more attention from the ecclesiastical establishments than at any other time during the last twenty-five years. But the arguments won't go away, and this new version will make very little difference to the situation.

That situation remains as I recently described it: There is an insoluble paradox that is always offered by apologists for new translations of the Bible. On the one hand they think they are making the text available as never before. On the other we somehow need interpretation as never before. ... What has really happened is that with a superior possession of a very few of the parts we have lost the whole. The loss is seen in the need for "interpretation" of what used to be thought to speak for itself. So we have the paradox of millions of copies of new versions sold but the Bible no longer generally available because thought to be sealed in its own vanished times.

IAN ROBINSON

**AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO : SELECTED WRITINGS.** Trans. and ed. by Mary T. Clark. SPCK. Pp 514.

This volume, one of the newest in the series, Classics of Western Spirituality, presents the editor and translator with a problem. Unlike most of the authors who appear, Augustine, immensely prolific though he was, left no writing, with the possible exception of Letter 147 'On Seeing God', which deals specifically with 'spirituality'. It is a pity, by the way, that there is no translation of Letter 130 to Proba, on the subject of prayer. Sr. Clark was forced therefore to go through the whole corpus of Augustine's writings in order to illustrate the main traits of his understanding of the way the individual should make his way to God. Her selection includes four books of the *Confessions* (7–10), *Homilies on Psalms* (119–122), two *Homilies on the Gospel of St John* (1 and 12) books 8 and 14 of *On the Trinity* and book 19 of *The City of God*, with a few minor works. The only slight drawback in the method of presentation is that although each treatise is preceded by a short introduction there is no hint given of the date of composition or, therefore of the place occupied by the

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work in the general growth of Augustine's mind. Indeed although some of the works translated took some while in composing, there is little real dispute about the date of *The Happy Life* (386) or the *Confessions* (396–398). One final remark on the choice of texts. The learned editor may have her own very good reasons for her selection, but there are two omissions, apart from the one already alluded to. It might have been helpful to have at least the end part of *De Quantitate Animae* in translation, especially since reference is made to it on page 26 of the Introduction. Secondly, perhaps the most powerful evocation of the mystical ascent in Augustine comes in 41st *Homily on the Psalms*, yet this is not translated; which is a pity.

The Introduction itself is lengthy and helpful. Sr. Clark clearly is in favour of a general coherence between Neoplatonist and Christian mysticism, though whether she would go as far as Abbot Cuthbert Butler in the appendix to his *Western Mysticism* in granting true mysticism to Plotinus is not altogether clear. My own impression is that she could have made more of the challenged presented to the mystical ideal of contemplation by the demands of charity in the later writings of Augustine, especially in the splendid 124th *Tractate on St. John*. She devotes a long time to the discussion of whether or not we should call Augustine a mystic (pp. 35–42) and gives a useful compendium of the various views that have been held, some of them passionately by the rival parties. I am not at all clear that Sr. Clark actually makes her mind up on the subject. Naturally a good deal turns on the way you define mysticism, but if the experiences described in the 7th and 9th books of the *Confessions* are not mystical, I should like to know what are.

The ungrateful work of translating is hard to achieve satisfactorily, but though I have detected few errors I must confess to having found the translation a little flat, and in one case certainly there was a strong similarity between the versions offered of the 19th book of the *City of God* by Classics of Western Spirituality and by W.C. Greene in the Loeb Classical Library. There is a persistent assignation of the text 'The just man lives by faith' to Hebrews 2:4, where the reference should be to Habacuc 2:4 (cf. *The City of God* 19: 18;23) — a mistake also made by the Loeb translator and a good example of common error!! There is an extraordinary error on page 307, whose cause I am unable to account for. The translation reads 'It (sc. love) is somehow cruel without bitterness, in the way of the dove rather than the snake'. Where does the snake come from? The latin of Homily on the First Epistle of St John reads at this point (= 7.11) *corvino*, which should translate 'crow'. But these are trifles and anyone who wishes to have a deepened understanding of the profound synthesis of doctrine and life offered by Augustine will find much in the volume of help. There is a useful bibliography and index of topics but no footnotes.

ANTHONY MEREDITH SJ

**RATIONALITY AND RELATIVISM. IN SEARCH OF A PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY** by I.C. Jarvie. *Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley. 1984. Pp. xiii + 157. £15.00*

For some years Professor Jarvie has been a strident critic of anthropology and the positions certain anthropologists adopt in their work and in the moral stands they take. He has seen anthropology to be an incoherent discipline when philosophically explained and the aim of the social sciences, 'to enlighten, and improve the lot of, mankind', is not generally supported. In his latest, and as one would expect, provocative book, he is remarkably autobiographical and laments that as a former graduate in social anthropology in the L.S.E., and now a professor of philosophy in York University, Toronto, he has never been taken into the anthropological fraternity. It is hardly surprising. He refused to do field work for a higher degree and preferred arm-chair analysis of those who had. He is a thorough-going rationalist, an atheist to boot, who wants anthropologists to come clean and to take sides with him in rejecting tendencies to epistemological and ethical relativism. In the