

the reviewer had to read a few pages of Jane Austen as an antidote before bedtime.

But we have yet to face, in the last chapters, the satanic era of our day; the 'Death of God' prophesied by Nietzsche; the Waste Land; the streamlined horror of genocide. It is well to be reminded, in the Introduction, that fundamentally the condition of the Christian soul is one of triumph: 'Take courage, for I have overcome the World'.

PARACELSUS. Selected writings, edited by Jolande Jacobi. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 25s.)

With Paracelsus, we are back in the sixteenth century: in a kind of murky twilight blending with a dusky dawn. It is a world of half-science, of new wine fermenting in old bottles. The figure of this physician who is also philosopher, astrologer, alchemist, typifies most vividly that epoch of Faustian conflict between old and new. He was a good man, searching for truth in every possible cranny of this strange world. He kept his faith through all the aberrations of pseudo-science which for him were reflections of the Truth.

The book is a selection from the voluminous writings, and must have entailed an immense labour from the author-editor. It is copiously illustrated with woodcuts, which have too the peculiar quality of that epoch.

C.B.

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGAN CULTURE. By M. L. W. Laistner. Cornell University Press. (Geoffrey Cumberlege; 20s.)

SANCTI AURELII AUGUSTINI SERMONES SELECTI DVODEVIGINTI. By D. C. Lambot, O.S.B. (Spectrum: Utrecht-Brussels; 6.25 Dutch guilders.)

SAINT AUGUSTINE: LETTERS. Vol. I (1-82). Trans. by Sister Wilfrid Parsons, S.N.D. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc.)

TERTULLIAN: Apologetical Works. MINUCIUS FELIX: Octavius. Trans. by Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., Sister Emily Joseph Daly, C.S.J., and Edwin A. Quain, S.J. (Fathers of the Church, Inc.)

Dr Laistner's book is made up of three lectures delivered at the University of Virginia, together with an English translation of St John Chrysostom's *Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring up their Children*. It was a happy thought to make the complete text of the *Address* available in English, and the translation, which is lively and careful, deserves the attention of anyone concerned with education. It is not only historically interesting, sometimes amusing, but full of shrewd practical advice. The pages on how to teach Scripture to children are especially worth attention for their sound psychology.

The text of Chrysostom is a relevant appendix to the lectures, which are concerned not so much with pagan culture in general as with

comparison of pagan and Christian educational theory and practice. The first is an excellent sketch of pagan culture in its decline, a background to the other two, which discuss the training of the Christian convert and the higher education of Christians in the first four centuries of our era. Good though they are, they leave a feeling of regret that Dr Laistner has not expanded his book, making the continuity of culture from classical times to the Middle Ages its main theme. He has valuable things to say on that subject, which clearly interests him immensely. But although he shows something of the debt of Christian educational theory to the Greco-Roman world, he has little to say of science or philosophy, and as a whole his book is a collection of notes for the larger work which his title suggests.

The other three books are all essential to Dr Laistner's subject. The first of them is noteworthy for many reasons. It is the first volume in a new series of medieval and patristic texts, *Stromata Patristica et Mediaevalia*, edited by Drs Christine Mohrmann and John Quasten, whose intention is to stimulate new critical editions of patristic and medieval texts, while at the same time providing short texts for the use of students in seminaries and universities. If the series maintains the standard of the first volume it will be excellent. Dom Lambot carries on the work of Dom Morin, and this selection is a specimen of the complete edition of St Augustine's sermons on which he is engaged. It is for its quality as a selection, however, that it will attract most readers of *BLACKFRIARS*, and it can be said at once that there is no better introduction than this to St Augustine's preaching. Thought and style are shown at their most characteristic in sermons on wealth and poverty, preaching, contemplation and action, lying, avarice, Christmas and Easter, the clerical life, peace and charity. Here is the preacher burning with charity, and reading some of the great climaxes one feels something of that emotion which must have gripped the congregations who listened in Carthage or in Hippo.

Augustine has been criticised for neglect of the problems of his day. The criticism is a superficial one by searchers for political Utopias. There was for him one problem, as there is for us, the spread of truth and charity, without which nothing will last. That he was not insensitive to the particular troubles of his time is clear from his sermons, but most of all from his letters, in which we see the bishop in the midst of local and international problems. There the greatness of the man comes out in a hundred different ways, and no one can fail to be moved and instructed by study of his letters.

To the new translation of his letters, and to the volume of Tertullian and Minucius Felix, the general criticisms of this series, made in a previous number of *BLACKFRIARS*, still apply. None the less, both

volumes are welcome, and the Tertullian volume is better equipped with notes than any of its predecessors. For this Fr Arbesmann would appear to be responsible. The works translated are the *Apology*, *The Testimony of the Soul*, the letter *To Scapula*, and the treatise *On the Soul* which is philosophically so remarkable as a venture in Christian materialism based on Stoic principles. In one volume, the student of philosophy now has what are for him Tertullian's most interesting works.

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

THE QUEEN'S DAUGHTERS: A Study of Women Saints. By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

Had the author of this book been almost anyone but Father Martindale, one might, on first seeing the title *The Queen's Daughters*, have been forgiven for feeling a little apprehensive. *A Study of Women Saints* might so easily be sentimental; might so easily be charming and insubstantial; might so easily be legendary rather than factual, enervating rather than spiritually robust.

In fact, Father Martindale's book is ideal spiritual reading. The accounts of the saints are beautifully written; they are comprehensive both as to the period of time they embrace, from the dawn of the Church's history to the present day, and as to the variety of character displayed by the galaxy of the women saints. All legendary matter having been rigorously excluded, the stories yet retain their charm and fragrance, such is Father Martindale's gift of presentation; the sturdiest rationalist will find no fault on grounds of credibility, so sober and reasonable is their content. The text, on the other hand, is not deadened by quotation of references for all the sources: 'I have felt it a duty', Father Martindale writes, 'not to "embellish" the historical evidence by the use of legends, however charming. It may indeed be that certain legendary details have found their way into these pages, but that was not intentional. And in a simple book like this it was not possible to add references to all its sources.'

The book is particularly valuable for spiritual reading in that it is gently didactic. The varied lives are unified in the Prologue and in the Conclusion, and the common traits of sanctity exposed for the reader's consideration. In the Prologue the sanctity of the women saints is related to 'Christ . . . the source of all sanctity'. In the Conclusion the ingredients which form the 'essence of sanctity' are discussed, and found to remain 'unalterable however much exterior forms may change', and to express themselves perfectly in Our Blessed Lady, who 'lived in no "enclosure", wore no special dress, never deviated from her vision, was always to the utmost "the Lord's handmaiden".'

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