

SAINT AUGUSTINE ON PERSONALITY: The Saint Augustine Lecture, 1959.

By Paul Henry, s.j. (Macmillan; \$2.25.)

The enterprise of the Augustinian fathers of Villanova University in organizing an annual St Augustine Lecture, this being the first of what we all hope will be a distinguished series, is deserving of our best wishes. But the sponsors of these lectures ought to do some hard thinking about their policy in publishing them. By English standards at least, the price is outrageous for what is really no more than a pamphlet of forty-four pages. And one cannot, unfortunately, say that it is well produced. Why should anybody be expected to pay so much for, among other things, five misprints—faulty proof-reading of Latin and Greek words—and at least two serious mistakes, in one of which a mistranslation makes M. Eliade say exactly the opposite of what he actually did say, the French original being disarmingly provided in a note?

P. Henry's lecture itself is just a little too full of high-sounding generalities. A few of these, of course, are almost *de rigueur* at solemn academic occasions, but a serious lecturer should limit himself to one at the beginning and one at the end of his discourse. P. Henry's succession of grand exaggerations aroused all the sceptical reserve of at least one reader. He has stimulating things to say about the connection of the ideas of person, relation, and history, and about Augustine's use of Aristotle. But there is a lack of clarity about the whole presentation, a want of critical assessment and analysis, which will, we fear, prevent this lecture from being what the editor of the series hopes, 'a significant contribution to the cause of Augustinian learning and scholarship'.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Marie Fargues. (Darton, Longman and Todd; 18s.)

YOUR LIFE OF OUR LORD. By Aidan Pickering. (Darton, Longman and Todd; 21s.)

WE AND OUR CHILDREN. By Mary Newland. (Darton, Longman and Todd; 16s.)

The first book, well translated by Patrick Hepburn-Scott, is addressed to French children of twelve to thirteen and can be most warmly recommended for use by English children. Many adolescents, after a diet of children's hymns written in bunny-rabbit style and of cosy little religious manuals, throw away the Baby Jesus tales along with the Baby Bunny approach. It is a welcome change to find an author who can begin a work of this kind by saying, 'Man has not yet visited all his domain'; religious awe and intellectual curiosity are awakened together, and man's scientific achievement is seen in the context of God's long preparation for man himself. The 'Is it true?' issue is lucidly treated: the author, avoiding defensive explanations of difficulties, shows her readers how to distinguish between symbol, picture and historical statement. Those who have had to deal with undergraduates troubled by J, D, F and P when studying Genesis will welcome this simple early preparation for the ground. 'The sacred writers did not hesitate to include old traditions, just as they found them'

puts the matter simply enough for an intelligent twelve-year-old. Incidentally, the author trains her young readers in precision of statement: 'Man is descended from monkeys: that is putting the matter badly'.

The second book, like the first, is well produced and imaginatively illustrated. The practical point, made near the beginning, that Palestine is the easiest country in the world to draw, has its uses: unfortunately, many readers will be irritated by the exclamation marks freely peppered over the pages, e.g. 'Peter was electrified!' This constant jogging of the reader's elbow *weakens* the effect of the narrative, and 'Well done, Peter!' as a comment on 'Tu es Christus' hardly adds to the impact of the Gospel words. It is in fact a little discouraging to find that notes intended for English teachers have a style which is less adult than that of Marie Fargues in her book addressed to French children. (Marie Fargues, in her own section for teachers, says that she aims less at instruction than at practice in religious thinking, and she makes many perceptive comments on the stages at which children are ready to receive a truth.)

The third book is a thoroughly practical one on bringing up children, illustrated by the author's own experience. She has a strong belief in discipline, and the keynote is zest. She gives eminently wise advice on helping children not to tell lies, and (this is not so often realized) provides hints to adults on how not to provoke lying. There is a sturdy page on teaching children how to explain their faith to other children in the (American) public school. This page might well be studied by those who ask always, 'Will they lose their faith?' and never 'Will they communicate their faith?' The author has no illusions about the difficulty of her task, but has a robust faith and an infectious gaiety.

The underlying theme of her book is in fact contained in her own statement that a child's soul is not a 'child soul', and that the only variation between the spiritual life for a child and for a grown-up is in the means of communication.

M. A. WILEMAN

CHRISTIAN YOGA. By Dom J.-M. Dechanet. (Burns and Oates; 21s.)

This book has a very definite practical purpose. It is to show how the technique of Hatha Yoga can be used by a Christian as a method of preparation for contemplative prayer. As such it seems to be extremely good and useful. Fr Dechanet has tried out this method now over a long period and has proved in his own experience how effective it can be. He describes in detail the effect it has had both on his prayer and on his whole life. He has worked out a system of Yoga exercises, which are both described and illustrated, such as any normal person can practise without great difficulty, and he shows how these physical exercises can be linked up with the practice of prayer and meditation.

There can be no doubt of the need of a book of this kind. The physical and psychological basis of prayer has very little place in the ordinary Catholic training. Most people try to pray kneeling, which is probably the worst possible position for prolonged prayer. The early Christian used always to pray standing, and this has something to commend it, but there