

Cross and restore hierarchy in our souls, put our spiritual house in order, and we shall find in this discipline, where love and charity cast out fear and guilt, that 'this life is a blessed one, like to that of the estate of innocence wherein all the harmony and ability of man's sensual part served him for greater recreation and as a help to a knowledge and love of God in peace and concord with his higher part'. (*Spirit. Cant.*)

ALAN KEENAN, O.F.M.

OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST. Translated by Abbot Justin McCann. (Burns Oates; from 8s. 6d.)

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST. A new translation by Leo Sherley-Price. (Penguin Classics; 2s. 6d.)

Two new versions bring a famous book before another generation of readers. Abbot McCann's has the usual form of the book of devotion—black binding, cross on cover—but is distinguished by the convenience of its shape and size and the clarity of its print. The translation is a new rendering which abolishes much of what the Penguin translator calls 'pseudo-Jacobean'; as, for example, the use of the second person singular unless when addressing God (though there is a passage in III, 6 where the devil is addressed as 'thou'). The text is divided into the now traditional sections, and there is a practical index. A short Preface gives some account of A Kempis and his work. (It seems to be implied that Gerard Groote was a priest. He remained a deacon.) It is a very nice edition.

The second version is in the familiar form of a Penguin book and the translator (who writes from H.M.S. *Indefatigable*) defines his purpose as 'to provide an accurate, unabridged, and readable modern translation'. The second person singular goes altogether, so does the division into sections. There is a sensible Introduction, which includes what used to be called the 'argument' of the books and relates them to the three classical 'ways' of the spiritual life. This neo-Elizabethan version should appeal to those who come fresh to the book, and it is always interesting. But perhaps one short passage will show that the often deceptive simplicity of the original is not easily matched. The Latin has: 'Quia post hiemem sequitur aestas, post noctem redit dies, et post tempestatem magna serenitas' (II, 8); for which we have: 'for after winter comes summer, night turns to day, and after a storm comes fair weather'. The meaning is there, of course; but something more than the rhythm has been lost with 'redit'. Some renderings are unusual; for example, taken at random, 'respect the knowledge that is entrusted to you' (I, 2) for 'potius time de data tibi notitia'; or, 'whoever loves God knows well the sound of His voice' (III, 5), where 'vox clamat' seems surely to anticipate the 'magnus clamor' of the next sentence. (By the way, a sentence has slipped out in XXI, 1.). But it is ill picking holes in a work that was so well worth doing and so well done.

A. E. H. SWINSTEAD