

the references are useful, contribute nothing to the understanding of Anselm and still less to that of his commentators. In brief, the philosopher will, it is believed, be appalled at the naïve facility with which words in any century or context are treated as tickets for ideas. And what theologian could agree that 'the history of medieval philosophy is the history of the failure and gradual abandonment of faith's search for understanding'?

Professor Burch would probably have done his students a lowlier and more exacting service had he devoted much greater space and time to a really sympathetic investigation of the world in which any one of his choice of thinkers worked, and left his excellent bibliography to do the rest. After all, access to the pages of Migne and the blessing of good eyesight may suffice to enable a student to compile a reliable body of facts, but something more is needed in the assessment of their value, and this is the province of the teacher. In the realm of philosophy, to tell only what a man has said is often to tell everything and practically nothing.

ST AUGUSTINE'S COMMENTARY ON THE LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, with 17 related sermons. Translated by Denis J. Kavanagh. (Fathers of the Church, Inc., New York; n.p.)

The two series of patristic translations now appearing in America have an interest quite apart from any service they may do the student. In those prepared for a discipline so alien to modern habits, they may make available to a public without Latin, matter for that traditional *lectio divina* which even in the cloister has been so largely lost to us. Probably the present volume is meant to serve some such wide purpose, for it cannot be said that it meets the needs of serious study, though the fact that the relevant passages from the *Retractiones* are printed in full in an appendix is a strong point in its favour. It is therefore a pity that the translation, while not inaccurate at least in those passages which have been compared with the Latin, is really rather pedestrian, and the effort at a biblical dignity of style results in a somewhat injudicious use of latinisms. 'Particles of discourse' take the place of 'particles of speech.' In the seventeen selected sermons which are appended, this failure to secure a rendering at the level of the original is even more evident. The polish and the tempo are gone. The book is produced with a somewhat ornate library finish, but is not altogether free from misprints, inversions and dropped numerals. The reference to St Thomas on p. 126 should read II, II Q. 84, not 74. A.S.

MATTER, MAN AND MIRACLE. By Henry P. Newsholme. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

Dr Newsholme introduces his book as an exercise in 'depoliarisation',

a word borrowed from Oliver Wendell Holmes, representing the process of enlarging the significance of a concept which has become unduly restricted in its interpretation. The concept in question is that of *inertia*, which the author seeks to detach from its restricted sense of resistance to mechanical change in order to trace its applicability to the whole of reality. Not only does he find it implicit in the rhythm of biological evolution, but he goes on to apply it to an analysis of habit and free-will in man, indeed to find it operating in the purely spiritual sphere of angelic activity. This seems to be carrying the process of 'depolarisation' rather too far. Inertia as a concept is essentially relative to movement and change, and will therefore be involved in the development and operations of all those things subject to change, whether mechanical, physical or biological; but inertia remains a property of mass, and its application to purely mental and moral activity must be in a very wide sense indeed. A state of inertia implies that the movement or lack of movement can be modified only from without; as the principle of the movement becomes more and more immanent, in the ascending scale of living things, so the applicability of the principle of inertia would seem to diminish. In purely spiritual activity, exercised independently of matter or mass, it is difficult to see how it applies at all.

No doubt Dr Newsholme would say that this was only further evidence of the 'polarisation' of the concept of inertia, but it remains true that the concept is limited, not only in its interpretation but in its objective content. One gets the impression that the author is so carried away by the excitement of his chase for 'inertial' phenomena that he sees his quarry at every turn and corner, popping out from behind every tree, yet never succeeds in running it down, so vague and indefinite in outline has it become. For all that, the chase is so obviously enjoyable to Dr Newsholme that the reader cannot help catching some of his excitement and enthusiasm at the vistas which are opened up in the discussions of the relation between matter and spirit, between disease, sin and evil, and between health, love and the creative power of God. These can be so absorbing that eventually one ceases to be distracted by the 'inertial' will o' the wisp, and is conscious only of a growing admiration for the author's power of throwing such original light on so many of the problems which must face any seeker after the 'right formula', whether he find it in the concept of inertia or not.

EGBERT COLE, O.P.

THE PILLAR OF FIRE. By Karl Stern. (Michael Joseph; 15s.)

The mystery of the Jewish rejection of Christ is more than a people's tragedy: it recapitulates the whole mystery of providence in a concrete and ever contemporary setting. And in our own time, which has seen