

REVIEWS

ST TERESA OF JESUS. By P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, O.D.C. (Sands; 7s. 6d.)

A new life of St Teresa by so distinguished an authority as P. Silverio de Santa Teresa must be welcomed by all admirers of the saint.

P. Silverio explains in the foreword that in undertaking this 'short life' his intention has been 'to enable those who have no time for lengthy Teresian biographies to become acquainted in a few hours with the life and doings of a great writer who, as woman and saint, has acquired a universal reputation, seldom equalled in the domain of Christian spirituality'.

The present work is thus, intentionally, elementary, rather an introduction to St Teresa than a critical or prolonged study such as the name of the author might lead one to expect, and this is at first disappointing; but such an introduction is no doubt needed, and is of course far better done by an expert.

The only way to get to know St Teresa fully is to read her own works, and that not once or twice but many times, but many people hesitate to embark on what they think of as too rarified a spirituality, and they may be encouraged to attempt it by acquaintance with her vital and human personality 'at once divinely human and humanly divine'. This important element of personal charm is indeed admirably brought out in this little book.

The text is supported by constant reference to original sources and by many useful footnotes.

The translation seems to suffer in many places from a too literal rendering of the Spanish idiom: phrases which in the original would read, no doubt, quite naturally and simply, produce in English a stilted and over-pietistic style, which is out of keeping with the general tenour.

The illustrations are quite unworthy of the text.

ROSALIND MURRAY

THE POEMS OF ST JOHN OF THE CROSS: Spanish-English text, translated by E. Allison Peers. (Burns Oates; 3s. 6d.)

The publication of the Poems of St John of the Cross in a separate volume fulfils a long-felt want, and the present edition, in which the Spanish text is accompanied by an English translation, page by page, is particularly useful.

The poetry of St John of the Cross has baffled the endeavours of many translators. Perhaps it is intrinsically untranslatable into English; the form and idiom of literary style may be too different; for any attempt to reproduce in English the fluent rhyming and lyrical cadence of the Spanish results inevitably in a jingle, more reminiscent of a popular hymn than of the original poetry; yet to

translate these lyrics into prose is to abandon more than half their magic.

Professor Peers's translations are not successful as poetry nor as substitutes for the originals, but printed as they are here, beside the Spanish, they will be useful in helping readers with a slight knowledge of Spanish to read the poems in the original, and that is no doubt what the translator himself would wish.

ROSALIND MURRAY

The *LIBER VITAE FRATRUM* of Jordan of Saxony, edited by R. Arbosmann, O.S.A., Ph.D. and W. Humpfner, O.S.A., S.Th.D. (Cosmopolitan Science and Art Service, New York; \$7.50.)

This is an historical commentary on the Rule of St Augustine completed towards 1357 by Jordan of Quodlinburg, a German hermit of St Augustine, who lived from 1299 to 1380. Its general presentation, ponderous in volume, matter and method, the critical apparatus, notes drawn out with scientific thoroughness, and learned concordances, might at first frighten away any but enthusiastic students of Augustinian monasticism. But it was meant to be read, as it was obviously written, not at one or two sittings, but in measured periods, and read thus it gradually captivates the simplest reader by the author's infectious love of the Patriarch of Hippo and of the way of life he founded. Though it is Jordan's 'most original and valuable work', and from 1571 officially replaced Hugh of St Victor's 'Commentary' on the Rule of St Augustine, it is, as the editors say in the preface, a rare book. Fr Humpfer is responsible for the historical side with the erudite Introduction and Fr Arbosmann for the critical.

In the Introduction we are told that Jordan was successively Lector at Bologna, Paris, and Erfurt (Saxon-Thuringian Province), Inquisitor, Provincial for many years, and even the Prior General's Delegate. This Introduction also contains a scholarly study of his literary work: one is even led to hope for more on his influence on the Way of the Cross. A point of particular interest is the editor's insistence that the Rule of St Augustine was written for monks, and not for nuns, as was held for so long. Equally noteworthy is the stress on St Augustine's definite intention of founding a religious order in the strict sense. The style of this Introduction sometimes sounds rather quaint: but the indices, sources, and bibliography are very complete. The printing, too, is pleasantly clear, though careful reading still brings out about a dozen misprints over and above those shown in the list of *errata*.

Jordan's actual text is remarkable for its division, which is typically Augustinian in its stress on the unifying power of charity. Thus we have: *Part I*, Community of dwelling: (a) Community life and its kinds, especially among the hermits of St Augustine (ch. i-xiv); (b) the common Augustinian habit (ch. xv); (c) the history of the hermits of St Augustine and their reunion by Alexander IV in 1256. *Part II*, Community of spirit: a commentary on the 'one heart and