

REVIEWS

LA DOCTRINE SPIRITUELLE DE DOM MARMION. By M. Philipon, O.P. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

The posthumous publication of *Le Christ idéal du Prêtre* in 1951 closed an epoch in spiritual writing which began in 1917 with the first volume of Abbot Marmion's great trilogy, *Le Christ Vie de L'Âme*. Convinced that any account of twentieth-century spirituality must begin with Abbot Marmion, Père Philipon prepared for this book by a careful study of abundant autographs and other manuscripts hitherto unpublished and by undertaking a number of retreats in Benedictine houses in order to capture the monastic spirit 'by osmosis and a certain connaturality'. The preface by Dom R. Thibaut bears witness to Père Philipon's success in interpreting monastic spirituality while the arrangement of material, with the balance nicely held between judicious quotation and linking commentary, leaves us in no doubt about the skilful and economical use of the sources.

The book is in two parts. In the first Père Philipon sketches briefly but with penetrating touches the chief events of Dom Marmion's crowded life and the stages of his transformation in Christ. The second part—'Our Life in Christ'—illustrates the major themes in his writings with quotations arranged approximately in the order of the trilogy. It concludes with some valuable pages on the priesthood and on our Lady. There is an epilogue on Marmion as the Doctor of our Adoption.

For Père Philipon Marmion is an 'Irish saint', 'an Irish monk with a missionary vocation'. The transition from pastoral work in Dublin to Benedictine life, though rapidly accomplished, was not easy as he had to endure difficulties caused by national and temperamental frictions and the tortures of an acute sensibility. Père Philipon gives due weight to these factors and notes frankly Marmion's weakness as an administrator. But the chief interest of this sketch is the study of Marmion's growth in Christ, the deepening of his spiritual life and the clarification of his doctrine. For guiding principles he went to St Thomas; for the decisive stimulus to Scripture, chiefly St Paul. Hence the great sobriety and balance of his teaching. He had no way to offer except 'the normal way of all who have been baptized'.

The second part, though in some respects less absorbing than the first, is no less rewarding. Père Philipon has succeeded admirably in giving the breath of life to his documents. The passages quoted—some of them fairly extensively—have all the doctrinal richness, all the bold synthetic power of Marmion's best published work and in

addition the urgency and force of a terse epigrammatic sentence or an occasional barbarism ('the Holy Eucharist "christifies" us'), or a memorable telling saying that epitomizes his teaching. Lovers of Dom Marmion have an opportunity to collect more of his beloved Pauline texts and more of his collects and secrets. They will have a rich find in a prayer 'written at the peak of his spiritual life', an act of consecration to the Holy Trinity, with its summary of his teaching and its revelation of his plan of life. On almost every page there is something to drive them back to his great treatises. Newcomers could ask for no better introduction to a sane and liberal master.

B.M.

LA MÈRE VIRGINALE DU SAUVEUR. By M. J. Scheeben. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

This is a translation from the second edition of *Die brautliche Gottesmutter*, an extract from the classic *Dogmatik* of Scheeben, with a few of the more technical passages omitted. The book appeared originally in German in 1936 under the care of Dr C. Feckes who holds the chair in Cologne archdiocesan seminary previously occupied by Scheeben. The notes printed at the end of the German edition are arranged in the translation as head-notes to chapters. They call attention to special features of Scheeben's Mariology, assess his dogmatic position in the light of later developments and supply references to current discussions in periodical literature, mostly German, especially for the important chapter on the 'supernatural character of our Lady'. The frontispiece—an appropriate choice for this product of Cologne—reproduces the statues of our Lord and our Lady in the choir of the cathedral which are thought to represent the heavenly dialogue between our Lord and his Spouse. The doctrinal inspiration of the choir decoration came from Blessed Rupert of Deutz, who gave currency to this idea in his commentary on the *Song of Songs*. Scheeben, the Cologne theologian, follows the example of Rupert.

As the original form of its publication suggests, this book was addressed primarily to the theological student; but this should not deter the less professional reader from using it, especially in the attractive translation by Dom A. Kerkvoorde, o.s.b., of Saint-André. As Dr Feckes points out in his introduction, the theologian will often be tempted to disagree with Scheeben's treatment of the data of tradition while accepting the substance of the argument. For the reader who wants to begin the study of Mariology and for those who want a dogmatic foundation for their devotion to our Blessed Lady *La Mère Virginal du Sauveur* is excellent.

B.M.