

REVIEWS

EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION; ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT. Vol. II:
Rome and Christendom. (Oxford University Press; 15/-.)

This second volume marks a considerable advance in the technique of the series. There is no luxuriant digression or incoherent theorizing and all the articles attain an adequate standard of scholarship. Indeed two of the contributions may possess a lasting value. Dr. Brown (pp. 523-599) has provided an essay on early Catholic history which is characterized by a clear perspective and a clear prose, by a sense of period and a sense of the unchanging Church. Dr. Wheeler (pp. 159-279) has given an authoritative summary of the results of modern research in Celtic pre-history.

In contrast, "The Roman Republic" of A. W. Gomme stimulates rather than satisfies. The condemnation of Etruscan art (pp. 24-25), the contrast between the p-celts and the q-celts (p. 9), the passages on the growth of Roman capitalism and the social exclusiveness of the Roman oligarchy are almost as open to argument as the ideal Sertorius (p. 124) and the wantonly ineffective Sulla (p. 142). But even the assumptions illustrate a close familiarity with recent scholarship and their number is additional evidence of a rare power of compression. Something of the same qualities may be traced in two essays on the Empire by S. N. Miller (pp. 279-253, 599-673). The extent of Romanization in the West and the defects of Roman culture are both perhaps overestimated. A Latin-speaking peasantry seems early posited without sufficient cause. In view of the drastic developments of three centuries it is hardly tenable that "the capacity for initiative had disappeared" (p. 507). In view of the Antonine revival in letters, of the vigour of African Latin and of the new psychology of third century sculpture, it seems strange to read that "Literature had lost all spontaneity and that there was progressive decline of creative power in the arts," while "moral mediocrity" (p. 503) inadequately expresses the flurried plungings in excess, the desire for the cleansing of an Initiation, the strength of Stoicism, the christianization of the Empire. But though the theories upon culture may be questioned they are balanced by a lucid analysis of the means of imperial administration and by a chapter on economic conditions which is admirable in its clarity and convincing in its detail. And it is the clearest achievement of the contributors that their essays blend into a whole.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

A SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION and other Treatises. By St. John Fisher. (Burns Oates; 2/6).

THE FOUR LAST THINGS. By St. Thomas More. (Burns Oates; 2/6.)

These two publications of the works of our martyr saints are a