

BLACKFRIARS

De Civ. Dei, X.x.10. We wonder whether the Editors of these *Fasciculæ* realize what a boon they are conferring by the publication of these series of excerpts. They are furthering in most practical fashion an already aroused interest in the works of the Fathers.

H.P.

DE COGNITIONE VERITATIS TEXTUS SELECTI S. THOMAE AQUINATIS. Collegit Josephus de Vries, S.J. (Opuscula et textus historiam ecclesiae eiusque vitam ac doctrinam illustrantia. Series scholastica, edita curantibus M. Grabman et Fr. Pelster, S.J. Fasc. xiv; pp. 60; RM. 1.10).

An attempt to elucidate the much discussed text of St. Thomas (De Verit. I. 9), from different interpretations of which various thomist solutions of the critical problem have been elaborated, by viewing it in the light of a number of other texts from St. Thomas's works. The conclusion to which this collation leads is that reflection upon the nature of the intellect must produce certitude of the possession of truth in as much as a natural desire cannot be *per se* vain, i.e., unfulfilled, and the intellect in fact does naturally tend to or desire knowledge of reality. Fr. de Vries hopes to expound his solution at greater length in the future; the present pamphlet which, except for a brief explanatory foreword (in Latin), consists exclusively of the texts selected, forms at least an extremely valuable basis of discussion.

G.V.

THE LIFE OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST. By the Very Rev. Denis Buzy, freely adapted with much additional matter by John M. T. Barton, D.D. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; pp. 283; 7/6.)

JESUS CHRIST: HIS LIFE, HIS TEACHING, HIS WORK. By August Reatz. (Sands; pp. 375; 10/6.)

THE SERVANT OF THE SACRED HEART: Selections from the Sermons and Meditations of the Bl. Claude de la Colombière, S.J. Translated and edited by G. O'Neill, S.J. (Sands; pp. 183; 3/6.)

LIFE AND WORK OF REV. MOTHER MECHTILDE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT (1614-1698). By a Nun of the Benedictine Community, Dumfries. (Sands; pp. 336; 7/6.)

PRACTICAL HINTS ON PREACHING. By the Rev. Aloysius Roche. (Sands; pp. 192; 3/6.)

A story whether of Our Lord or of one of His saints must, if it is to be good, be the work both of reason and of vision: if science is the sole factor of production the result will be dry;

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and if reason is left out of count the result is liable to be formless, indefinite. There must be science, but it must be science made flesh. There is a hagiographic tradition in which neither of these elements is perceptibly involved: a tradition founded on indiscriminating sentimentality, whose fruit is slush. From this evil we can only pray for deliverance: the time is evidently not yet.

Dr. Barton's adaptation of Buzy's work on St. John is an excellent study, detailed, clear, alive. The length of the original has been considerably reduced by the omission of topographical detail, theological discussions, and reviews of rationalist positions; while, on the other hand, additions have been made in the light of more recent research. Difficulties are dealt with as they arise and different opinions given and discussed without impeding the continuity. The author's bibliography is enlarged and brought up to date, there is an analytical index as well as an index of names. The book should be useful alike to students and to the general reader interested in the story and personality of the Baptist.

Professor Reatz does not seem to have achieved the fusion of science and inspiration so adequately. His book comprises an able summary of Our Lord's life showing how 'everything centres round His Person, not merely round His teaching,' a study of the Personality of Christ, His Messianic consciousness, His doctrine, His Church; but one feels that there is something lacking: apart from occasional passages or phrases the learning is not shot through with life; the book is instructive, not inspiring.

Though the author disclaims any intention of writing an apology for the divinity of Christ, rationalistic views are continually mentioned; they seem in consequence to be dealt with at times in a somewhat cavalier fashion. There are some curious phrases: Our Lord is said to have 'believed in' His miracles (p. 54); 'His faith' occurs also on p. 52. And if, at Cana, there were 'plenty of natural ways out of the difficulty' (p. 49) would Jesus have resorted to supernatural ways?

The selections from Bl. Claude de la Colombière would have been the better for drastic adaptation of the style to modern English standards. As they stand they do not for the most part carry conviction: the thought is not sufficiently arresting to overcome the lack of sympathy in language. In one place the editor has guarded, in a footnote, against the impression, which might very well have been given, of a tendency on the part of the author to vilify nature: one has, certainly, the feeling that *gratia perficit naturam* was not one of his first principles. 'To create and to annihilate' (p. 87) is not descriptive of the mystery of transubstantiation.

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A tradition has been referred to above which is thoroughly bad. The life of Mother Mechtilde exemplifies the faults of that tradition. Unnecessarily, for the life of Catherine de Bar might have made good reading.

Some of the Practical Hints are useful. But it is dangerous, surely, to say the least, to advise that no books be used in preparing sermons. The specimen sermons given were presumably composed on this method.

To write out the entire sermon is helpful only to some. Is a 'devotional sermon' which is neither dogmatic nor moral worth preaching?

G.V.

BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

LE CARDINAL DE BÉRULLE : MAÎTRE DE LA VIE SPIRITUELLE. By Claude Taveau. (Desclée de Brouwer; pp. 382; 15 frcs.)

The papal confirmation of the Paris Oratory in 1613 marks the opening of a new phase in the development of French religious thought. For the growth of St. Sulpice was its corollary and as the sharp antithesis in theory between the lives of the religious and the secular clergy slowly faded, the teaching of an Oratorian school of spiritual writers met with wide acceptance in very different sections of the priesthood. It is still customary to describe this school as *Bérulliste*. The term in its narrower sense would seem misleading. Yet if Pierre de Bérulle was not the founder of a new tradition he was at least one of its earliest representatives. A sense of *La Civilité de la maison de Dieu*, a rigid coherence of concepts and a distaste for violent imagery mark each treatise; traits due in part to the influence of the great Capuchins and symbolizing the final acceptance of a Catholic culture by the close-knit social life of Northern France.

Dom Huizben and M. Dagens have shown the influence of neo-Augustinianism and of the Tridentine formularies on the slow growth of this movement. Père Taveau is the first to estimate that of Thomist metaphysics. To him the primacy of Being as being and the real distinction between essence and existence are fundamental to De Bérulle's theory of contemplation. Yet it might seem that he has proved an implicit rather than an explicit Thomism and provided *Bérullisme* with its legitimate development rather than a commentary. For while as an analysis his work is admirable, as a synthesis it is too successfully symmetrical to reflect the changing facets of Bérulle's thought. In Claude Taveau another great Oratorian has his Pryzwara,

G.M.