

Any Catholic library that fails to secure this book is doing itself less than justice. The only thing the author has not noted—because it is not there to note—is any striking echo of the spirit as opposed to the letter of the faith to which, according to legend, Father Parsons reconciled the wavering John Shakespeare. Why, one wonders, has the most memorable appeal to the compassion of Christ in Elizabethan literature come from a dramatist comparatively destitute—as far as we know—of Catholic background?

'Oh, I will leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?
See where Christ's blood streams in the firmament:
One drop would save my soul . . .'

This is the Southwell touch; and not all William Shakespeare's picturesque apparatus of bell, book and candle, orisons, robes pontifical, holy water, and the rest, substantiate Catholic England—the England of the Middle Ages, the England of the Elizabethan martyrs—as do these lines of the notorious atheist Christopher Marlowe.

H.P.E.

THEOLOGY AND SANITY. By F. J. Sheed (Sheed & Ward; 12s. 6d.)

'My concern in this book is not with the will but with the intellect, not with sanctity but with sanity'. Mr Sheed goes on to add, and with good reason, that 'the difference is too often overlooked in the practice of religion'. No longer can the complaint be made that there is, in English, any amount of 'pious reading' but no theology. In one leap Mr Sheed has supplied what was desperately needed, a clear and adult commentary on the truths of Faith which does not apologise for its use of reason in illuminating them. Writing with a lucidity of style and an aptness of illustration that reveal a disciple of St Thomas who is yet not a mere translator, Mr Sheed brings off the most tricky dialectical feats because he realises the capacity of the intellect to apprehend truth and, too, because he realises the intellect's limitations. Nothing is more impressive in this book than the confidence of its argument—and its fundamental humility. He is in no doubt about the relations of love and knowledge, but reminds us firmly that 'if a man loves God knowing a little about him, he should love God more from knowing more about him: for every new thing known about God is a new reason for loving him'.

It is needless to summarise *Theology and Sanity*. One can only urge every adult Catholic—priest, religious and layman alike—to buy it. The structure of the book is roughly that of the *Summa*: God, Creatures, Oneself. Its remarkable quality is most apparent in the chapters on the Blessed Trinity, where the necessarily abstract concepts of a technical theology are brilliantly expounded but by no means 'simplified' in the short-term interests of apologetics. The magnificent structure of truth which emerges at the book's close will inspire its readers to continue the exhilarating work of using their minds in the service of God, and the criticism (apart from the occa-

sional questioning of a terminology which, one admits, must be a difficulty within the loose structure of contemporary English) must be of the lack of references to St Thomas and other classic theologians. In a second edition we hope Mr. Sheed will add references and a bibliography, not indeed to overburden his book with the apparatus of scholarship but in order to open to the traveller he has brought so far the wide lands of theology—and sanity! I.E.

WORD-HOARD. By Margaret Williams (Sheed & Ward; 15s.)

Philology, to the uninitiate, is almost as dreary a science as Economics. The mysteries of Grimm's Law and *Umlaut* provide a good deal of academic industry, and the 'illustrative texts' remain too often closed to the general reader. The dilemma—should the texts be modernised and thereby weakened, or should the prospective reader be compelled to learn Old English?—is admittedly hard to resolve. But Miss Williams, herself a professional philologist, has achieved an excellent compromise. Her book is an anthology of Old English literature from the sixth to the eleventh centuries, sufficiently modernised to be easily intelligible but yet retaining much of the verbal force and metrical character of the originals. The extracts are linked together by an intelligent commentary and a summary of what is omitted.

Beginning with *Widsith*, whose 'word-ward' gives an effective title, Miss Williams takes the reader by easy stages via *Beowulf*, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Judith*, to *Ælfric*. An example (from *The Seafarer*) will suggest the quality of this book:

'Storms beat the stone-cliffs where the sea-swallow cries,
icy-feathered; full oft the eagle calls,
dewy-feathered. No protecting kinsman
can bring comfort to the soul in loneliness.
Full little he thinks. who has life's joy
and dwells in cities and has few disasters,
proud and wine-flushed, how I, weary often,
must bide my time on the brimming stream'.

Word-ward is an excellent guide to a poetry that will be an exciting discovery to those who have thought of *Beowulf* and such only in terms of dreary texts, inaccessible, weighed down with annotations. The illustrations to the book are amusing; unintentionally so in the case of the seventeenth century Archbishop Ussher, who is portrayed with a pallium! ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.