

In speaking of *L'Échange*, he says that Claudel's theme is 'that God's ways are inscrutable'. This is true, but elsewhere he implies that the playwright forgets the inscrutability and sets himself to explain them too completely, thus landing himself in difficulties. It may be true that here and there Claudel claims to know too much and to forget that even for him God's ways still hold mysteries, but the sense of the inscrutable, even of the absurd, is strong in his drama, and Dr Chiari dwells too heavily on his didactic-explanatory side. In speaking of his didacticism, he is right in saying that, unlike a Shaw or a Sartre,

'he is not concerned with the propagation of certain philosophical and moral beliefs and ideas in terms of human psychology and behaviour; he is a poet, and as such he is concerned with expressing and conveying to man the truth which lies at the centre of his whole being, in terms of symbols, metaphors, analogies and images'.

Such an attitude is scarcely deserving of the (in this context) pejorative word 'didactic'.

It is generally admitted that Claudel improved and enriched *La Jeune Fille Violaine* when he rewrote the play for the third time and published it in 1912 under the title of *L'Annonce faite à Marie*. Practically all the changes he then made in substance, structure and detail were for the better. Dr Chiari stands out, among students of our poet, in that he considers that *L'Annonce* marks the spoiling of a first-rate peasant tragedy. It would take too long to examine all the reasons he gives for this unusual opinion, but they show him to be insensitive to the heightening of lyrical and dramatic power in the new version, and the chapter devoted to this part of Claudel's work is the weakest in an interesting book.

CUTHBERT GIRDLESTONE

THE THREEFOLD GIFT OF CHRIST. By Brother Bernard. Edited and translated by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (Mowbrays; 2s. 6d.)

This small work was erroneously attributed to St Bernard because its author bears his name. But this Brother Bernard, though he has obviously read the sermons of his great predecessor, writes in a very different style and his thought, which is centred on the Blessed Sacrament, is clearly later.

Brother Bernard tells us in his introduction that he is writing at the request of a priest, but his work can be read with profit by layman and priest alike. This priest wants to know 'from sound authorities and with relevant quotations' how Christ when veiled in the Blessed Sacrament at the same time abides in glory. Bernard, having emphasized that this is a mystery, which cannot be fully understood on earth, goes on to say that, nevertheless, by considering the matter in relation to the whole

scheme of God's dealings with man, we may, with St Paul, 'see in a glass darkly what we can'. He discusses it under three headings according to God's three gifts to man, or rather one gift thrice given, which is our Lord's gift of himself to be the price of our redemption, our food for the journey, and our reward in heaven.

At the end of the treatise, Bernard, wishing to help us to think of heavenly joys, thinks to do this by describing their opposite, the pains of hell. The editress, thinking that the truly mediaeval descriptions of 'the undying worms . . . the serpents and dragons, horrible to look at and to hear; who live in flames just as fishes live in water . . . who crawl over and gnaw those members by which we have principally sinned . . .' will scarcely help modern man to think of heaven, has wisely replaced this section by part of a sermon by St Bernard on the 'Weight of Glory', which makes a very fitting finish to this attractive little treatise.

A. J. MEIKLE

ST THOMAS AQUINAS: THEOLOGICAL TEXTS. Selected and translated with notes by Thomas Gilby. (Oxford: Geoffrey Cumberlege; 15s.)

In some ways Fr Thomas Gilby's *Theological Texts* is an even more distinguished work than its companion volume, *Philosophical Texts*. The selection of texts from the corpus of any important writer is a most exacting task, calling both for a detailed knowledge and a power to isolate key passages and present them without distorting their meaning. The selection made by Fr Thomas has drawn upon the whole range of St Thomas's works and the arrangement is superb. The result is a book that contains some priceless little treatises—the section on theology, for example, or the sub-section on the Eucharist; indeed, the whole section on the Church is most rewarding for the double emphasis it lays on the twin poles of word and life in the doctrine of the mystical body.

Selections of texts are a necessity for the student and this selection is so good that one is almost reconciled to the necessity. In the long run no selection can ever be a substitute for the whole treatment of a subject, nor can a selected text ever have quite the same significance as a statement in its context. Nonetheless Fr Thomas's selection shows such insight that it should help the advanced student in his study of the text itself as it will provide him with invaluable clues.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.