

THE MIRROR OF FAITH. By William of St Thierry. Translated by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker. (Mowbrays; 6s.)

'Authorities like Etienne Gilson and Louis Bouyer have implied that William of St Thierry is the greatest of the Cistercians in thought, depth and originality.' These words appear upon the fly-leaf of this book; it is good to see them there; but we fear that the translators (perhaps themselves responsible for these words) do not appreciate wherein this greatness lies. One first suspects this upon reading the introduction, and one's suspicions are confirmed by the translation itself.

In the introduction much is said about Abelard. This is not surprising, because Abelard had a profound affect upon William of St Thierry—and profound is precisely the right word; this is what the translators do not seem to realize. William's reaction to the teaching of Abelard was not one of panic. We can in *no way* agree that 'William was guilty of an injustice to the greatest mind of his age'. Nor can we accept that 'Abelard's mind was wholly incommensurate with his period'. The translators, interpretation of St Thierry would seem to be based upon his comparison with Abelard, and the following passage is most revealing: 'In their different ways William and Abelard were aiming in exactly the same direction. William's way of belief was just such a deep insight as Abelard's, but instead of using reason and dialectic, William comes to understanding through love.' First, it is just such deep insight that I would ultimately deny to Abelard. It was Abelard's success, the success of his undoubted *genius*, that led him to think that his own field was that in which all questions could be answered. What he lacked William certainly did not, namely that understanding, that deep insight, which comes only in the love and humility of the perfect Christian life. Secondly, to talk in this way of love and reason as if they were alternatives shows a failure to realize the true part that love plays in William's theology, and a failure to grasp the very nature of what is at stake. William's grasp of this is astonishing, and is probably amongst his greatest achievements. In reacting to Abelard he attained a deep insight into, and understanding of, the nature of theology. He understood (and this he makes explicit in his *Enigma Fidei*) the way in which one is doing something almost entirely different when one is talking about the revealed mysteries to when one is talking philosophically. The realization that there is no perfect correspondence between human words, concepts and judgments on the one hand, and the divine Word himself on the other—except in the 'union of the Spirit'—has a strong affect upon his manner of expressing himself. To those who have not fully grasped this, his language may well seem to be roundabout and repetitious. This very way in which he expresses himself does, in fact, contain a

depth of meaning—a depth which cannot be conveyed in paraphrase. The translators have made what very nearly amounts to a *précis* of this work rather than a translation; and in doing this they have definitely risked the danger of merely skimming the piety off the top. It is not, in fact, as bad as this, but it certainly represents but very little the deep and penetrating thought of William of St Thierry.

G.H.

NOTICES

SOME of the following books deserve a full review, but can only be noticed briefly here because their subject-matter (philosophy, literature or history) is not the direct concern of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*.

ERASMUS AND THE HUMANIST EXPERIMENT, by Louis Bouyer, Cong. Orat. (Chapman, 18s.), traces the relationship between Christian civilization and Renaissance humanism, from Nicholas of Cusa and Vittorino de Feltre to Paul III.

THEIR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES, by Thomas O'Brien Hanley, S.J. (Newman Press, Maryland, \$2.75), is a study of the history of Maryland in the seventeenth century, and of the way in which the colonists worked out a new and freer relationship between the Church, the state and the individual citizen than that which prevailed in Europe.

BALZAC THE EUROPEAN, by E. J. Oliver (Sheed and Ward, 15s.), is a study of his life and writings, interesting and well written.

GOSPEL QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES, by Bernard Basset, S.J. (Sheed and Ward, 8s. 6d.), contains more than two hundred inquiries, each preceded by the appropriate excerpt from the gospels in the Knox translation. The inquiries were tried out over a period of nine years before publication, and should prove very useful for individual as well as group use.

LIVING THE MASS, by F. Desplanques, S.J. (Newman Press; Sands, 12s. 6d.), is a series of meditations on the mass, intended to help the faithful participate by offering themselves to God along with the host. The content is excellent, but the English translation, which is printed in a free-verse form, is sometimes flat and prosaic, sometimes ponderously rhetorical.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE ART OF LIVING, by J. A. O'Driscoll, S.M. (Herder, 9s. 6d.). A short treatise on the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, firmly based on the Bible, the Fathers and St Thomas, but presented in a rather dull style.

THE CROSS OF JESUS, vol. 2, by Louis Chardon, O.P. (Herder, 30s.). A treatise on the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the human soul, by a French Dominican of the seventeenth century.

THE DYING AND LIVING LORD, by Helmut Gollwitzer (S.C.M. Press, 5s.). Fifteen sermons on chapters 22-24 of St Luke, originally preached