

is the scrupulous fairness with which the author presents all the arguments on a given problem, even those with which he himself disagrees. Only after he has stated fully and lucidly all the aspects of the problem, and all the important opinions, will he permit himself to indicate what seems to him the likeliest solution. Even then he often seems to be inviting the reader to judge for himself. The description of Bultmann's theory of the Gnostic 'saviour-myth' (pp. 312-313) as an influence on John is a notable instance of this absolute fairness. The third characteristic is the author's consistently positive and constructive approach to contemporary non-Catholic new testament study, which contrasts most favourably with the excessively cautious and traditionalist attitude of too many of the earlier Catholic manuals. Dr Wikenhauser never fails to accord due weight to the value of tradition, but he does show at the same time how much of positive value is to be derived from contemporary non-Catholic sources. Here we would select as an example the treatment of form-criticism (pp. 254-277), widely regarded even by non-Catholic opinion, as one of the finest short presentations of the subject ever given.

The translation gives the impression of being generally competent and careful, though the English is often somewhat clumsy.

Representing as it does the wisdom of one of the very greatest of contemporary new testament scholars, distilled from many years of teaching experience, this volume deserves, as a matter of bare justice, to be recognized as a work of monumental importance. Its translation into English must accordingly rank as a major event in the history of Catholic new testament study in English-speaking countries.

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

CHILDREN'S BIBLE. Text by W. Hillmann, O.F.M.; illustrations by Johannes Gruger; translation by Lawrence Atkinson. (Printed in Germany for Helicon Press, Baltimore; in the U.K., Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

CHILDREN AND PRIEST AT MASS. By Hubert McEvoy, S.J.; photographs by Anthony Powell, S.J. (Oliver and Boyd; 5s.)

Parents who wish to encourage their children's leisure reading are often faced with a problem: where are they to find really good religious books, intelligently written, aesthetically pleasing, free from sentimentality, and inexpensive? Here are two which can be warmly recommended for children between seven and ten.

Children's Bible has at least one picture on each of its ninety pages, and most of them are in colour. It would be difficult to praise them too highly: the artist has a clear and vigorous style, and his delightful pictures show a genuine religious imagination at work. The events

related are well chosen, but the narrative style is uneven—sometimes rather archaic, when quoting verbatim ('Behold the handmaid of the Lord'), sometimes rather colloquial ('Grab him quickly'), sometimes unnecessarily difficult (why not *came down* instead of *descended*?)—and of course there are traces of the book's American origin in spelling and idiom. But the excellence of the pictures amply makes up for these shortcomings.

The pictures in *Children's Bible* are intended as a stimulus to the imagination, and the artist rightly shows a blithe disregard for naturalistic accuracy. Fr McEvoy's purpose is to show children how to assist at mass, and photography is the ideal medium. Here again the illustrations are outstandingly good: about half are of the priest at the altar, the others show the congregation (mainly children) taking their part in the mass by movement and gesture. The text explains how we should worship God with body and mind together. This is welcome teaching, and very well done. There is only one small criticism to make: the little altar-boy is perhaps rather too cherubic, and the photograph of him which appears on the dust-cover might have come from a 'holy picture' of the more sentimental kind. It would be a pity if any prospective buyers were put off by it. A.G.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI: His Life and Writings. (*The Mirror of Perfection*, with all the known writings of the saint.) Translated by Leo Sherley-Price. (Mowbrays; 15s.)

The life and personality of St Francis of Assisi still exercise the same fascination as they did seven centuries ago. Now as then he has a message for everybody. Probably all do not receive the message in its pristine clarity: it is often obscured by sentimental pantheism in the case of authors outside the Church, and by a plethora of interpretations from writers within the Catholic fold.

Lovers of the *poverello* will welcome this new translation of *The Mirror of Perfection*. First written in 1318, it is a collection of short accounts of incidents in the saint's life, recorded for the most part by his contemporaries. They catch the authentic glow of that strange ardent flame which was peculiar to Francis and was never equalled in any of his followers, with the possible exception of Clare.

To collect the known writings of the saint at the end of the book is an inspiration. We can find our old especial treasures and even discover new ones without long search and reference to the appendix which usually tails any book on St Francis.

Leo Sherley-Price's translation is eminently readable and attractive; and it is not confused by the footnotes and glossaries which are so apt to put off the reader who is not interested in historical and scholastic arguments.