

find fault with Augustine on one point or another. It is noticeable that where his doctrine is criticized it is often identical with subsequent Catholic doctrine, and this fact is usually noted by the writer; there is no attempt to claim Augustine for the Reformation. But it is not appreciated, it seems, that in many cases the point at issue was common doctrine in Augustine's day, too, and not just a personal theological opinion of his own.

The contributors by no means have all the same point of view. Some tend to make too much of the opposition between his neoplatonist and his biblical thought; others realize that this opposition is a construction of commentators rather than a reality in the mind of Augustine, for whom orthodoxy was large enough to comprehend philosophical truth and was not felt to be at odds with it. One contributor remarks that Augustine's was an existentialist cast of mind, while another considers that he never broke loose from the Platonic pre-occupation with natures and essences, and that his moral doctrine in consequence never came to grips with the concrete, the particular, the historical, or with individual personality. Such differences of opinion are all to the good in a book like this one, because they oblige the student to use his own judgment, and to turn to the originals for material to base it on.

The first section of the volume is introductory, with three articles on Augustine's significance today, his life and his work as a pastor. The third has five articles on special aspects of his thought, while the main central section is of seven articles introducing the student to his writings. All his works are covered, either individually or in groups, with the deliberate exception of his sermons and his scriptural commentaries. This omission is all the more regrettable because it seems so unnecessary. Two extra articles would not have added much to the volume's bulk, while the lack of these two topics make a real lacuna in the presentation of the subject. Augustine preaching is Augustine at his very best, and an invaluable example for all preachers; and when he is meditating on the Scripture he is doing the work he had most at heart, and his manner of doing so, though strange to modern minds, would serve well to offset the bias of present-day critical exegesis, if his principles were sympathetically understood and explained.

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THE FRENCH BIBLICAL EPIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. By R. A. Sayce. (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Clarendon Press; 35s.)

By this exhaustive and scholarly investigation Dr Sayce has illuminated one of the least-known aspects of what is perhaps the most-studied century of French literature. Not only has he read (in itself a formidable undertaking) and analysed those long-forgotten epics on Judith or

Joseph or David, but he is also able to demonstrate that, slight though their strictly literary merit may be, they form yet another reflection of the three great movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Humanism, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.

In the first part of the book Dr Sayce deals with the literary and cultural background, summarizing the development of epic theory in both France and Italy and showing the development of Biblical and Oriental scholarship under the impetus of Humanism. It was above all the renewal of spiritual life effected by the Counter-Reformation which led to an attempt to re-Christianize art and letters while keeping them in harmony with classical theories. The second part of the book gives a brief account of the poems themselves and of their writers. Nearly all the earlier poems are by Protestant writers; already during the first decade of the century two tendencies are clearly discernible: the Protestant, deriving from Du Bartas with a deep feeling for the Bible which is treated organically, and the Catholic, inspired by the *Pléiade* and Tasso, where the Biblical poetry is penetrated by classical mythology which forms a living atmosphere rather than a mere ornament (as it is with the Protestant writers). Dr Sayce shows how closely the development of the Biblical epic follows the evolution of ideas and reflects the religious climate of the time. A whole chapter is devoted to Saint-Amant's *Moyse Sauvé*, the only one of these so-called epics whose oblivion seems undeserved for it is one of the most interesting literary manifestations of the baroque spirit in France, deriving its inspiration from Ariosto and Tasso. By the time we reach the cosmological writers of the end of the century, particularly Charles Perrault with his *Adam*, the much more philosophical and abstract treatment anticipates the great writers of the eighteenth century.

The last and perhaps most interesting part is concerned with the genre as a whole. Dr Sayce examines in considerable detail the extent and manner of the use made of the Bible; in general the Protestant writers tended to accept Old Testament morality without question, whereas the Catholic writers found it necessary to rationalize and explain it in terms of contemporary standards. He devotes particular attention to the 'merveilleux' (the 'merveilleux chrétien' was discovered before the romantic theorists) and finally he reaches the conclusion that fundamentally even the Biblical epic, in spite of its didactic aim, was concerned with literary rather than purely religious values. The former are examined in detail in the chapters on structure and technique and on the heroic style. A chapter on the visual arts concludes this thorough survey which will certainly remain the final word on a subject whose relevance to the study of the period has been amply demonstrated.