

tion of the *De Anima*, its historical importance is unmistakably highlighted by the dogged determination with which St. Thomas, following the not-always-clear teaching of the Stagyrite, demolishes that interpretation at every turn. Certainly there are a multitude of perplexing difficulties attaching to or arising from the psychology of Aristotle, as M. Gilson has pointed out. Nevertheless, in that psychology St. Thomas Aquinas found the most satisfactory account of man's body-soul composition; and so he did not hesitate to subscribe to it in great part.

The present edition, a first translation into English, includes a fresh rendition of the Aristotelian text according to the version of William of Moerbeke, the text St. Thomas used. The translators have carefully altered both version and Commentary where this seemed advisable and have mentioned and sometimes justified the fact in footnotes. There is a wealth of footnotes discussing other textual difficulties as well as doctrinal points within both text and Commentary. Father Ivo Thomas, O.P., has contributed a splendid Introduction, outlining the general character of the Commentary, date and occasion, etc. There is a detailed account of the Averroist issue in its historical setting and its place in relation to St. Thomas' work. Worthy of particular attention and commendation is a section on Aristotle's method in definition with accent on the definition of soul arrived at in the *De Anima*. Several difficult passages in the Commentary (due originally to Reginald of Piperno, not to St. Thomas) are also examined and explained.

The translators are obviously well-qualified both in Greek and Latin scholarship, and—somewhat unusual in English translations—in the use of our English tongue. The labor and scrupulous care which they have expended in this work bear gratifying fruit in accuracy and ease of expression. Divisions and subdivisions are regularly numbered and set off in line of type, a great help to the reader. A fairly extensive Index to the Commentary is provided. The series, of which this is the fifth volume, of *Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science* bids fair to assume an outstanding place in the ranks of modern serious intellectual endeavor.

J.P.R.

The Fathers of the Western Church. By Robert Payne. New York, The Viking Press, 1951. pp. 312. \$5.00.

Robert Payne is, with good reason, a popular figure in the publishing mart. Just in the past year he has turned out six full-length books on subjects ranging from the problem of Communism in China to this account of the Fathers of the Western Church. Of course his

work is not notable for its scholarship. What could we expect of such a busy man?

He deserves some praise for making the book readable. It is seldom dull, for his lively imagination is a definite asset in sustaining interest. Here and there we find perhaps a hint of genuine attraction and sympathy for these heroes, a clumsy grasp of the real significance of their lives. These qualities, however, are undermined by the blundering or brazen misstatements, scattered so prodigally throughout the book. Perhaps our author is a fine novelist or dramatist, but here his failure as a biographer is apparent.

Anyone who writes about real people assumes the obligation to respect the honor of their reputations, even if they've been dead for a thousand years or more. Posterity is bound to a painstakingly attempt at accuracy in estimating their lives and writings. Such accurate estimations of the Fathers of the Church are compiled in the science of Patrology, so that biographers of these revered men cannot unconcernedly depart from the scientific appraisals of patrologists, formed over the course of centuries, to flaunt instead impetuous, fanciful judgments, unsupported by argument or references. And when, as is conceded, there are points on which the "scholars profoundly disagree among themselves" (p. 15), there is still no justification for contributing unique and unsubstantiated opinion. If the author be unwilling "to smother them (the Fathers) with footnotes" (p. 15), then let him stick to the indisputable facts.

Here are but a few of the passages which will astound the reader who would rightfully expect a reverent and judicious treatment of these venerable saints and sages:

"The precise inflections of Aramaic are lost to us. Words like 'love-feast,' 'the Kingdom of Heaven,' 'the Son of Man,' and 'the Messiah' subtly altered their meaning as Christianity evolved in the hands of the Fathers, as the words lost their Jewish connotations and assumed new and ever changing interpretations in the hands of men who were strangers to the Jewish cult." (p. 17).

"Paul speaks about Christ, rarely of Jesus. The man who broke the bread and blessed the wine is exchanged for the Son of God on the right hand of the Father." (p. 19). "Paul was continually changing, molding, improvising the shape of doctrine." (p. 23).

"Even after his conversion he (St. Augustine) was able to talk about doubt as though he understood the matter well enough; he is not entirely convincing when he takes the part of the devil's advocate, pretending to be inventing false arguments." (p. 152).

"Sometimes he (St. Thomas Aquinas) will forget that God is a

trinity: sometimes God is simply perfect beauty." (p. 296).

St. Paul the Apostle and St. Thomas are among those whom the author includes besides the generally recognized Fathers.

There is scarcely a chapter which does not direct particular attention to the "pride" or "hatred" of these saints. "Bernard hated all who opposed him, as only the saints hate." (p. 248). "Pride dogged him (St. Gregory). He was very conscious of his sin, for he speaks about pride so often that he was clearly obsessed with it." (p. 214).

In defense of St. Raymond who is introduced on page 287, and described as an ex-Dominican, we reply that he did not resign from the Order of Preachers to become a preacher in Spain (which seems quite incongruous anyway). He resigned his office as *superior* of the Order. Nor was St. Thomas present at the General Chapter of the Order in London in 1263, according to modern historians.

There are many more instances of distorted facts and lack of information, but Mr. Payne probably wouldn't be interested. He intends to go on grinding out six or seven books a year, so he won't find time actually to get acquainted with the Fathers of the Western Church.

D.M.N.

BRIEF NOTICES

Simple Rosary Meditations. By a Dominican Tertiary. Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1951. pp. 164. \$2.25.

A perfect recitation of the Rosary must include at least an attempt at meditation upon the mysteries which comprise this special prayer to Our Lady. However, many find that the meditation is the most difficult part of this wonderful prayer. Their attention wanders very easily and the resultant distraction often leads to discouragement, and consequently to discontinuance of the prayer.

It is this difficulty that the author wishes to alleviate. The book is designed as an aid in keeping the mysteries of Our Savior's life constantly before the mind during recitation. With the message of Fatima in mind, the author first offers meditations on the mysteries, with peace as their theme; then the theological virtues and the seasons of the liturgical year. True to the title, the meditations are short and simple—composed for the average reader.

With the help of this little book, a more fruitful meditation is certain to result in a more perfect and efficacious prayer. "If we would truly raise our minds and hearts to God, therefore, we shall fill them with the knowledge and love of God made man." T.M.