

**The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit.** Translation by C.R.B. Shapland. New York, Philosophical Library, 1951. pp. 204. \$6.00.

St. Augustine, speaking about the Trinity, said, "Nowhere is error more harmful, the quest more toilsome, and the finding more fruitful." Consequently, the works of the Fathers concerning this mystery are most valuable to any theologian. The very depth of this mystery, concerning as it does the intimate life of God, demands that we follow in the footsteps of authority. There is every reason, therefore, to thank Mr. Shapland for this first translation of St. Athanasius' letters on the Holy Spirit.

These letters are a rebuke to those called the *Tropici* or the *Pneumatomachi* who held that the Holy Spirit was a creature. Although the letters are principally directed against this heresy, the true doctrine of the other Two Persons is touched upon by reason of the nature of the Trinity. Fundamentally, what the *Tropici* were denying was the unity of the Three Divine Persons in the divine nature. It seems that the unity in the Trinity was a continual stumbling block for the heretics of the East while the heretics of the West directed their efforts against the distinction of Persons. The denial of the "*Filioque*" in the Eastern Church is the remnant of this rebellious spirit against unity. In regard to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as the Father, it could not be said that St. Athanasius explicitly held this. Yet there are implicit witnesses to the "*Filioque*" in the first letter.

The value of this work is found chiefly in its exegetical method. St. Athanasius answers the objections of the *Tropici* by explaining and correlating scriptural references. Consequently, he has drawn out a great number of texts from both Testaments and established their relation to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. All this is to the advantage of the theologian who must always check any rational construction against positive revelation in order to avoid error. Because his work has a purely scriptural content, it is safe and sound. Yet for this very reason it is necessarily limited in any penetration of positive doctrine. He will go as far as the expression of the Scriptures bring him and then he holds up the caution of mystery. It would seem he did not approve of any explanation that was expressed in non-scriptural terms. This position is due no doubt to his own personality and to the contemporary abuse of rational concepts in heretical interpretations. His place in the Church was to prepare the way for a fuller penetration of the mystery of the Trinity by holding on to positive doctrine against

the attacks of the heretics. In less dangerous times other doctors would build upon his foundation.

Mr. Shapland presents to his readers more than a smooth translation. The apparatus he has added shows a historical and theological skill as well as literary accomplishment. The aids to the reader include a profuse number of footnotes, indices, outlines, and historical introductions. Mr. Shapland appears to be an Anglican. But evidence of this is found only in the translator's introduction and not in the work itself. C.B.

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**The Stumbling Block.** By Francois Mauriac. New York, Philosophical Library, 1952. pp. iv, 79. \$2.75.

Francois Mauriac wrote this little book with the intention of setting down his thoughts "about the things which have to do with the one thing which is indispensable." Writing about a spiritual state and recording his reactions as a Catholic, M. Mauriac presents some of the "manifest abuses" among worshippers. He is often irritated and embarrassed by those zealots, "the pious Barnums of the Holy Church," who consider faith in quantity rather than in quality.

M. Mauriac argues for a democratic Christianity, a militant Catholicism, and a love for the truth. But how can these things become real without holy preachers of the Word of God? M. Mauriac professes to be unmoved by their efforts. He refers to preachers in this puzzling fashion: "When I hear a holy orator speak forth in eloquence, I wonder whether he really hopes, whether he has any reason for hoping, that souls can be changed from the height of the pulpit; I would like to believe so, but it scarcely seems credible to me! I confess that, for my part, he usually inspires in me nothing but the wish to calm him, and say to him: 'Don't work up a sweat, you'll make yourself ill.'"

Apart from its literary value, *The Stumbling Block* offers little to the reader. In fact, it may be far more dangerous than any of the abuses to which the book calls attention. Many statements concerning the spiritual order lack accuracy of expression. Consequently, this book cannot be recommended to anyone, save the extremely cautious reader.

C.H.O'B.

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**Gregorian Chant.** By Marie Pierik. St. Meinrad, Indiana, Grail Publication, 1951. pp. 126. \$3.00.

The name of Marie Pierik is well known in Catholic musical circles through her two previous books: *The Spirit of Gregorian Chant*