

Isidore has a habit of applying strictly christological texts of scripture to our Lady: 'We saw her glory, as the glory of the only-begotten Mother of God' (p. 344). Miss Graef insists that writings like these must not be glossed over, because they go far to explain the popular excesses of late medieval piety and the reformers' often exaggerated reaction to them.

Her discussion of the Eastern attitude to the Immaculate Conception is important and shows that 'it does not serve the cause of reunion if we in the West affirm that the Orthodox have always taught the Immaculate Conception and only stopped doing so out of sheer cussedness as soon as Rome defined it. They have, indeed, always taught the perfect purity of our Lady; but, having a quite different conception of original sin, this simply meant and means another thing to them than the Immaculate Conception means to us' (p. 350).

It is rather disappointing to turn from Miss Graef's book to the collection of essays on our Lady by a group of Anglican scholars; disappointing, because most of these essays are somewhat ephemeral. They show that there are some Anglo-Catholics who find the doctrine, and even the language of Catholic mariology almost completely acceptable, but that is all. They remain 'essays by Anglicans' rather than 'Anglican essays'. There are three exceptions—an essay by Dr Allchin, full of magnificent quotations from sermons of the Laudian divines, a frank and lucid discussion of the evangelical position by Canon de Satgé, and an essay by Dr Austin Farrer entitled 'Mary, Scripture and Tradition'. For this last alone the book would be worthwhile. Dr Farrer, using the Virgin Birth as an illustration, studies the validity and limitations of the 'deicit, fecit' principle against a wide background: the attitude of the believer towards, and his criteria for historicity. An essay of this calibre is a contribution to genuine mariological dialogue, and it should encourage any Christian to make his own the prayer with which the Abbot of Nashdom ends the book—'Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of all Christians, draw us all into that unity which your Son desires'.

NICHOLAS LASH

ST CHARLES OF SEZZE: AUTOBIOGRAPHY; Translated and edited by Father Leonard Perotti, C.F.M.; Burns and Oates, 25s.

Charles Macchione was born in 1613 in Sezze, a town in the Italian Province of Lazio, some eighty miles from Rome. At school he was a poor student and only learnt to write with difficulty. When he was twenty-two years of age, he became a lay-brother in the Order of Friars Minor, having already had a vision of our Lady who appeared to him whilst he was working in the fields: 'My son, if you want to keep all your promises to me, then become a Religious as soon as possible' (p. 24).

His progress in holiness was rapid but not easy. Beset with difficulties from without, in the shape of a rather harsh Superior, and from within, through many temptations of the flesh, he nevertheless reached 'the highest degree of

prayer' (p. 190), where the soul, 'despoiled of all affections loves only God its Creator'. He was particularly devoted to the blessed sacrament, obtaining permission even in those days to communicate daily. He was also an advocate of frequent confession. Like the founder of his Order, his charity was exteriorised by a practical love for the poor, whom he fed and tended whenever he was given the chance. It was while he was assisting on day at mass that he received, through the intercession of St Joseph, he tells us, a mysterious wound in his heart; 'I had been pierced by the hand of Our Lord with the dart of His love' (p. 148). Charles died in Rome in 1670, was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1882, and canonised by Pope John XXIII, April 12th, 1959.

This autobiography is an abridgement, published for the canonisation of St Charles. The critical edition is in preparation.

Besides the autobiography, the saint wrote many works on prayer and meditation containing high doctrine. Since St Charles was unlettered, there is obviously an element of the wonderful about his literary work, and theologians have commented on this fact. No less wonderful, however, is the life of this simple lay-brother, as he himself unfolds it in his autobiography. Visions and interior locutions, prophecies and spiritual insights, extraordinary encounters with animals—all these things are almost embarrassingly prolific. Temptations were violent and frequent, the devil sometimes assaulting him physically, attacking him and striking him, leaving him like a dead person. (cf. p. 53).

It is a pity that even this abridged version was not furnished with a critical introduction. Since Fr Thurston's book, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, which appeared in 1952, many things which appear so strange in the lives of the saints as to be almost incredible, are explained by Fr Thurston in the light of modern research, without any detriment to the sanctity of those who suffered them. Nor is there any implication that such explanations tend to the opinion that the devil is old-fashioned for our more sophisticated age. But *autre temps, autres moeurs*; it is perhaps a pity that what is here presented as an undeniable adventure in grace of an heroic nature should not catch our fancies because of its baroque pattern. No doubt the words of Pope John are a comforting reminder of what it is essential to remember. Commenting on the occasion of the canonisation of St Charles of Sezze and St John of Vedruna, he reminded his hearers that saints were canonised because of their heroic virtues, particularly indicating in these two their triumph over their own natures, their perfect resignation to God's will, and their heroic exercise of virtue.

The book has a postscript by Fr Severino Gori, O.F.M., which discusses the wound of love which St Charles received, but it is merely informative. There is a chronological index, always useful, and a list of the saint's works, published and in preparation. There is a further, and rather curious, appendix, which is headed: Personages who had a great esteem for St Charles and sought his help. Amongst these are impressively listed three popes and sundry cardinals and noble families. But why?

D. RAFFERTY