

AUGUSTINE'S QUEST OF WISDOM. By Vernon J. Bourke, Ph.D. (Bruce Publishing Co.; \$3.00).

This may justly be described as a first class piece of work, though the somewhat extravagant statements on the paper cover that the work is "staggering", and that the "analyses of the Augustinian masterpieces are strung like pearls on the sterling chain of the saint's life" are hardly calculated to prejudice a reviewer in its favour. Professor Bourke has not only read much that has been written on St. Augustine's works but—the indispensable requisite for his task—has steeped himself in the Saint's life and writings.

His framework may be described as biographical, his aim as psychological. Following his hero as boy, student, priest and Bishop, he shows how he passed from paganism to Platonic Christianity, from Manichaean views of the Deity to the Incarnate Word, until at last he stands revealed as the great Doctor of the West. The whole is a fascinating study by one who, through many years of toil, has thoroughly equipped himself for his task.

But Dr. Bourke does not, I am sure, look for eulogies in a review; as a scholar he would prefer criticism. And first of all we regret his saying that Augustine "had a particular aversion for Greek: he hated Greek with the unreasoning intensity of a child. He did learn some Greek but he never acquired any great facility in the reading of that language. It remained a tongue foreign to his interests and temperament" (p. 4). Now Augustine does, it is true, say that he knows but little Greek, (*Petil.* ii. 91). But St. Gregory says the same of himself though he had been Papal Legate at Constantinople for three years. The truth is that these great scholars did not think they 'knew' a language unless they could speak it fluently, unlike Chaucer's young lady whose "French was that of Stratford at Bow". St. Jerome only arrived at his profound knowledge of Hebrew by declaiming it out loud, to the inconvenience of his neighbours. In that sense, then, Augustine may never have been proficient in Greek, but his constant references to Greek Biblical MSS. (e.g. *Ep.* cxlix. 5, 8, on *Ps.* lxxvii and lxxxvii. 7, 9. on *Jos.* ix, *Heptateuch* VI. xii), his minute study of the precise meaning of certain Greek terms (*Ep.* cii. 20. *Civ. Dei.* X. 1); his use of the Greek Fathers when arguing against the Pelagians—though, as Cassiodorus points out, (*Instit.* I. xv) their works were not at that date translated into Latin—his quotation of the Greek of St. Chrysostom and of St. Basil with his own Latin version, *Contra Julianum*, i. 18-26, ii. 17, and finally his dissatisfaction with his Exposition of the Ep. of St. James because he had not at the time a satisfactory translation from the Greek (*Retract.* II. xxxii), all these instances—and they might be multiplied indefinitely—show that Augustine possessed a familiarity with Greek which most of us would envy.

Again, Dr. Bourke says that:

"Whether Augustine espoused the doctrine of creationism or generationism (of the human soul) he found great difficulties. There is little wonder that the saintly Bishop of Hippo never succeeded in solving this problem" (p. 236). But this might leave the reader with the impression that Augustine was not convinced of the immediate creation of each individual soul. He allows, of course, that this cannot be proved from Scripture (*Ep.* ccii. 8-18), and he expresses very clearly the difficulties involved in the doctrine (*Emp.* cxlviii. 4. *cIvii.* 41. *ccii.* 15). But when he says to St. Jerome: "You clearly hold that God now creates every individual soul for each person as he comes into the world", it is evident that he agreed with St. Jerome, though he found it difficult to see how that doctrine could be squared with the transmission of original sin, (*Epp.* clxvi. 8, 10, clxix. 12. *clxxx.* 4, *cxc.* 16).

Dr. Bourke is now and again somewhat 'pontifical' in his attitude towards other writers. Not all his statements would prove acceptable to every Augustinian student. He dissents from me on points of chronology—always a vexed question when dealing with the precise order of events in St. Augustine's life, and on at least two occasions he convicts me of mistakes or rather slips, for which I am grateful, namely the date of Augustine's reading of Cicero's *Horthensis*

where I wrote inadvertently his twenty-first instead of his nineteenth year, and when I gave June 2nd as the date of the second day of the Collatio with the Donatists instead of June 3rd. But was it necessary to remark apropos of this that "for some odd reason this work (my volume), which is otherwise quite valuable, is utterly unreliable in matters of chronology"? (p. 171), or to say that my dating *Epp. clxvi-vii* "early in 418" is "ridiculous" (p. 184), or that I am "hopelessly confused" about the date of Augustine's consecration, and rather scornfully to repudiate the date 1, with Father Zarb, suggested, after much careful work, for the *De Trinitate*? These are, of course, but trifles and in no way detract from the value of Dr. Bourke's excellent work. But it may be questioned whether such criticisms make for that harmony and mutual consideration which should subsist between scholars engaged on the same absorbing task. Moreover, readers of Dr. Bourke's fascinating study might well be excused if they felt that my *St. Augustine of Hippo*, now unhappily 'blitzed' and unobtainable, was an unreliable piece of work.

There is an excellent Index and a chronological Table. The absence of a bibliography seems regrettable and the map opposite p. 20 does not seem very useful. Perhaps, too, ch. xi. might profitably have preceded ch. x. HUGH POPE, O.P.

FLAME IN THE SNOW. By Julia de Beausobre. (Constable; 10s.).

Serafim of Sarov, a hermit, was canonised by the Russian Church in 1903, seventy years after his death. *Flame in the Snow* is his story, based more on the vivid oral tradition of the vast forest where he lived than on the conventional legend of official biographers. The forest is a lumber-camp now, and it was while nursing in the camp hospital there that Madame de Beausobre got to know Serafim, whose spirit still broods over the unhappy country of his earthly life—with its churches destroyed, its monasteries closed and the world he knew gone for ever, as it seems.

This moving and radiant book, coming as it does from a dissident source, should do more for a sympathetic understanding of the Eastern tradition of holiness than any amount of speculative discussion of the differences that so tragically divide West and East. Serafim is one with the Fathers of the Desert: he has the same power of taming the rebellious beasts about him; he practises the same spectacular austerities, but cheerfully, without advertisement; he remains united to God in that simplest, yet deepest, embrace of contemplation that was theirs. He emerges from the book as real and loveable, set against a coloured background of Russian country life; one is reminded of Turgeniev all the time. It is hard to recall any recent book that has succeeded so well in making sanctity credible—and attractive, and that through a graciousness of writing and a discernment of judgment that are rare gifts in a hagiographer, and deserve therefore a grateful acknowledgment. Five contemporary illustrations and a charming dust-jacket complete a most welcome book.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

SOCRATES ET JESUS. Par Thomas Deman, O.P. (Paris: L'Artisan du Livre, 1944; n.p.).

Socrates and Jesus. Their respective lives, deaths, teaching, methods, parables, disciples. Human wisdom at its most sublime and divine: divine wisdom at its most lowly and human . . .

The theme is an almost inexhaustible one, capable of countless variations, and it could not fail to have engaged the attention of Christian, non-Christian and anti-Christian from the earliest days of our era. Père Deman passes in review many of his predecessors in this attractive field of comparative research and speculation, from the most scholarly and factual to the most imaginative and tendentious. But there are unaccountable omissions. Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* is surely the most profound and penetrating of all, and P. Deman could have employed them with advantage to add depth and substance to his own more pedestrian chapter on "Entretiens socratiques, enseignement de Jésus." Still more surprisingly he makes no allusion to Père Lagrange's wonderful comparison of Plato's account of the Socratic Banquet with St. John's account of the Last Supper discourses.

Père Deman's own contribution belongs to the scholarly and academic rather