

and readable translations of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers to the French public. Anything which spreads the knowledge of Christian texts is welcome as serving to deepen our appreciation of the riches of the tradition of the Church. Nonetheless these source-texts are difficult and require, at least for the non-specialist reader, much more interpretative commentary than they have been given. They are fragments of a living tradition and they need to be presented as parts of that tradition. Each has its individuality, and often its peculiar bias; each is a fragmentary witness. The first centuries of the life of the Church are magnificent, but the Church lives on; in returning to these centuries we must not lose sight of the valid teachings of other generations which serve to clarify many points. There is no going back on the guidance of the Holy Spirit as expressed in any age, and while we must feed on the Fathers, we must not use them as an escape from the scholastics.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

**PRIMITIVE MAN AND HIS WORLD PICTURE.** By W. Koppers. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

Dr Koppers is an associate of Father Schmit, and his ethnological theories derive in a large measure from him. His present work is at once interesting and irritating. It is interesting in that it contains a good deal of the findings of field workers. The chapter on the religion of the Bhils is a case in point and even more rewarding is the section on the Yamana of Tierra del Fuego. The latter, on the authority of Darwin, were long regarded as 'godless', but in 1922 Koppers and Gusinde were put on the track of evidence which led to the discovery that the Yamana believed in a Supreme God. Dr Koppers makes it clear that this belief was not derived from their contacts with Europeans. In parenthesis, it is an unpleasant thought that these people would not speak to missionaries of their deepest convictions since they were made to feel that their religious ideas would be regarded as mere nonsense.

The book is irritating in that it introduces a great deal of irrelevant academic controversy and because of its 'either-or' method of demonstration which frequently overlooks 'third' possibilities—particularly those arising from psychological considerations. In spite of these defects the book does serve a purpose in that it presents evidence often ignored in books on the origin of religion—though it may well be doubted whether anthropology is in a position to pronounce on this subject.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

**SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER.** By James Brodrick, S.J. (Burns Oates; 30s.)

It cannot be said that we in England, whether Catholics or Protestants, are lacking in appreciation of that very great man and missionary, St Francis Xavier; yet there has been a lack of a really satisfactory biography

in English, especially in view of the tremendous work of research carried out for so long by Father George Schurhammer. On the other hand it is true that the new edition of the saint's letters by Fathers Schurhammer and Wicki appeared only in 1943-44, and eight years is not an unconscionable time to wait for their reduction to the purposes of a biographer. Now we have the result, and what more could be asked? The thirty years' labours of a great scholar, the sixty-six volumes of the *Monumenta historica S.J.*, to say nothing of other sources, digested into half a thousand pages by Father James Brodrick, than whom no one is better equipped in every way to have undertaken the work.

It is a book which it is superfluous, indeed impertinent, to praise: it is definitive in English, as a biography of its subject and a literary work of high distinction. But then nobody who has read Father Brodrick's *St Robert Bellarmine* or *St Peter Canisius*, or his essays in *A Procession of Saints*, is in need of being recommended to *St Francis Xavier*; for others, recommendation is implied in this reviewer's enthusiasm. Father Schurhammer, we are told, has found 'the real Xavier under the great pyramid of pious accretion built upon his humble bones by the mistaken reverence of biographers and editors throughout four centuries', and it is free of these accretions that Father Brodrick presents him; and thus stripped, Francis is an even mightier and more holy figure than previous writers had led us to believe. We are apt to think of him as a man of the Renaissance: 'he was mediaeval to the core', says Father Brodrick, and the portrait he paints justifies the claim. Such a character, a 'mediaeval Jesuit' in the India and Japan of the sixteenth century, is peculiarly suited to Father Brodrick's sensitive and virile art; his wide allusiveness and sometimes salty wit relieve the sobriety of a narrative that is not only the life of, but a most worthy monument to, one who was in no merely formal sense a confessor of the faith.

The publishers have done their work well: *Saint Francis Xavier* is a handsome book, with necessary maps, a dozen unusually good illustrations, and an excellent index.

DONALD ATTWATER

ST VINCENT DE PAUL. By Mgr Jean Calvet. Translated by Lancelot C. Sheppard. (Burns Oates; 21s.)

This very fine biography of St Vincent de Paul by the former rector of the Institut Catholique of Paris, owes a great deal of its power to the fact that the author, instead of writing the kind of hagiography which makes us feel that the saints are abnormalities inhabiting realms of spiritual fantasy, has, after giving us an excellent account of M. Vincent's origins, character and training, followed up as many of the varied trends of the history of the France of Vincent's day as are relevant to the saint's activities. By this method, which he pursues with great erudition and