

in the presence of a man who is truly God, the presence of a divine person who is also truly the carpenter from Nazareth. Quotations could be multiplied; here is one: 'We remind ourselves that, though Christ is God, his manhood was not just a garment he chose to wear. He was not pretending to be man for our Redemption. He *had become* man for our Redemption. His human nature was a real nature, and really human.' And another: 'That he was true man means that in the early years of Nazareth he was true child. He had to be nourished as other children are — or God would have been undernourished; washed as other children are, or God would have been left unclean; dressed as other children are, or God would have lain naked.'

Everything else in the book is subordinated to the author's purpose of getting people to *think* about Christ. Mr Sheed uses the back-cloths of history and geography to throw gospel incidents into relief. He prods us into considering the doctrinal implications, the 'theological roots and fruits' of the New Testament. He illustrates the 'thrust of the Old Testament into the New'. And as we might expect, he is alive to problems, not unwilling to suggest an 'apologetic' line of argument when one seems to be called for.

It could be objected that he tries to do too much; that, in spite of careful planning and arrangement, this is not a tidy book. But the lack of one minor virtue is a small price to pay for the richness and clarity of Mr Sheed's reflections. Specialist scripture scholars (for whom this book was not written) may find some of the author's positions too conservative for their taste: there are 'harmonising' tendencies at work, and the chronology is perhaps too neatly sewn up; but the book remains a stimulating and rewarding contribution to Christian literature. A layman's book, primarily; but a tonic, surely, for everyone whose vocation involves the communication of religious truth. 'The object is not to prove something but to meet someone — that we should know Christ Jesus . . .'

DAVID GOTHARD, C.R.I.

Fr Gothard was working on this review during his last illness. His early death has deprived this journal of a valued contributor. May he rest in peace — EDITOR.

**MADAME DE CHANTAL: Portrait of a Saint**, by Elizabeth Stopp; Faber and Faber, 35s.

This is, according to the dust-cover of the book, 'the first modern critical biography, based on the original sources, of St Jane Frances de Chantal'. The sub-title of the book is also not without meaning: for 'portrait of a Saint', by which Dr Stopp means the 'personal and spiritual development of a saint', seen against its background in time and place (*Preface*), is most certainly fulfilled in this excellent biography. Dr Stopp has made use of original and unpublished

material in the Visitation archives at Annecy, as well as a personal knowledge of the topography, beautifully described throughout the narrative. The most ardent 'salesian' should be more than satisfied. There is a useful Bibliography - from which Bremond's Volume II of his *Literary History of Religious Thought in France* is curiously absent. The Index is very tidily arranged, and there is also a useful chronological table. The illustrations, some of them published for the first time, are tasteful and always apt.

Jeanne-Françoise Fremyot was born at Dijon in 1572. Her father, Bénigne Fremyot, councillor and later president of the parliament of Dijon, was a fervent advocate of the Catholic cause in a country plunged into religious dissensions. He was a man of firm principles, and was a great influence on Jeanne in her formative years. She was educated at home, eventually sharing the life of her sister 'with its daily round of entertainment' (p. 25). A suitable match was arranged for her, which she fortunately agreed to wholeheartedly, and when she was twenty she married Christophe, Baron de Rabutin-Chantal. She had four children, and proved to be a devoted mother and an exemplary châtelaine. Her husband was wounded in a hunting accident in 1601, and as he lay dying she cried to God: 'Take all I have, my children, everything, but leave me my husband' (p. 43). He died, however, and though she was resigned, her grief was overwhelming. She was, at this time, unusually devout for a young woman of her station, but her state of mind was troubled. She placed herself under the direction of a friar who seemed to be rather *en vogue*, but through his misunderstanding of her character she suffered rather than gained. She met St Francis of Sales in 1604, when he came to Dijon to preach the Lenten sermons, and after a prudent delay, he formally accepted the charge of her direction.

The story of these two saints is now a classic in the literature of hagiography, and their mutual profit one of the outstanding examples of a friendship ruled, but not marred, by grace. 'Nothing', writes her Director, 'could possibly separate your soul from mine, the link is too strong; death itself cannot break it because it is fashioned from a substance that lasts to all eternity' (p. 81).

Her gradual desire to give herself more completely to God, and the design St Francis had in mind of founding a special Congregation, eventually led to her leaving her father and her children, and going to the Galerie at Annecy as the foundress of the Visitation. The early companions of Madame de Chantal are described, those women of whom Bremond said, 'the purest flame of French mysticism has been lighted by them'. To their foundress, and to them, we owe the *Treatise on the Love of God*.

On the death of St Francis, St Jane-Frances tells us, 'I took immediate refuge in the thought of God and of his will' (p. 187), and it only seemed to lead her on to greater heights. Incredibly active, with many years still before her, she undertook arduous journeys on behalf of the Visitation, and by the time she died, aged sixty-nine, in 1641, 'there were eighty houses and the order had spread beyond Savoy and France to Switzerland, Italy and Poland' (p. 207). The most important of these foundations she made in person. Her death, beautifully

described by Dr Stopp, was seen by Monsieur Vincent in a vision - the only experience of this kind he ever had. He himself had taken over her direction on the death of St Francis of Sales.

The above outline obviously cannot do justice to the wealth of detail with which Dr Stopp enriches the narrative. Never losing sight of the woman, whom she describes in picturesque detail: 'Her brown dress trimmed with velvet . . . the neat white guimp . . . her fine forehead and the light brown colour of her hair' (p. 31), the growing character of the saint is finely drawn, illustrated generously from her letters and the descriptions of contemporaries. The scholarship does not swamp the narrative, and there is most clearly distilled that *grand goust général du saint amour de Dieu*, which St Francis wrote of in *The Devout Life*, when urging Philothea to read the lives of the saints.

One trifling criticism: a misspelling occurs in the Bibliography of the name Vermeyleen (not with the final 'i', as it is given). Also, and rather by way of query: in dealing with the *Treatise*, Dr Stopp gives a lucid summary, but her appraisal of the rather surprising last chapters, with a return to ascetical principles, is perhaps too naïve. It has been suggested by a recent scholar that St Francis, owing to his continued dislike of Benet of Canfield's system of mysticism, which was very popular, did not take his book to the rarefied summits that it leads one to expect, and he returned to 'the valleys' (p. 159). (cf. *Post-Reformation Spirituality*, by Louis Cognet, *Faith and Fact Books*, p. 66). Also Dr Stopp's remarks on p. 229, that to those who had no Latin, the amount of spiritual reading 'was still very limited at the beginning of the XVIIth century', does not take sufficient account of the importance of translation literature at precisely that time. This has been established by a recent definitive work on Bérulle (cf. *Bérulle et les Origines de la Restauration Catholique, 1575-1611*, by J. Dagens, pp. 104ff.). The book is quoted in this context by Vermeyleen, whom Dr Stopp includes in her Bibliography.

D. RAFFERTY

AFRICAN HOLOCAUST, by J. F. Faupel, Geoffrey Chapman, 25s.

'*African Holocaust*', says the author, 'was started as a revision of *Black Martyrs*' - and now clearly supersedes it, incorporating the exhaustive researches of Fr Lefebvre, W.F. The total result is a work of impersonal but magistral, unhurried competence that is most impressive: a heavily documented story in which one detail after another is soberly laid down building up to a tremendous climax. There is a certain 'majestic instancy' about it, an 'unperturbed pace' that belongs most effectively to both theme and period. For Lourdel and Mackay were Victorians, and Victorians of grandeur, both of them; and the martyrs have the marmoreal greatness of those other, in some ways rather similar, martyrs in *Callista* and *Fabiola*. A great deal of the story is presented in authentic dialogue and diaries, so personalities come over whole, including the young Africans.