

monks of the West. S. G. A. Luff's essay, which surveys in a more restricted manner a good deal of the same material, has some points to make which are complementary to what Professor Chadwick has to say. Especially worth making was the observation that 'of the Sayings of the Fathers those which originate in the more solitary deserts are above all concerned with the theme of fraternal charity, whilst the less edifying stories seem to originate in the cenobia. At Nitria, on the approach of visitors, the brethren poured out like a swarm of bees, for the most part carrying pitchers of water and bread. But it was not the custom at the walled monastery of Isidore, where the visitor was lucky to receive a night's lodging at the gate, and in the morning a blessing, and a dismissal.'

Thus wherever sterility in the Christian virtues has overtaken the monastic life, it has been necessary to return to the primitive sources. It is here that Professor Chadwick's volume has made ample provision for us. With a very just sense of proportion it gives us a particularly generous and painstaking translation of a large section of the *Verba Seniorum*, seven of Cassian's *Conferences* and the complete Rule of St Benedict. We may note that the translation of the Holy Rule follows Dom Justin McCann's interpretation of *scapulare* in chapter 55, though not, it would seem, his contention about the late latin superlative. It also adopts the suggestion that St Benedict's *bibliotheca* in chapter 48 means that each monk is given one book of the Bible for Lent. It would be hard to find a single volume of comparable richness and erudition to put into the hand of anyone who wanted to read for himself the most important sources of primitive western asceticism.

ÆLFRED SQUIRE, O.P.

OUR MASS. By Mgr Chevrot. Translated by J. Holland Smith. (Challoner Publications; 21s.)

THE MASS: CHRISTIANS AROUND THE ALTAR. By the Community of St Séverin. Translated by Margaret Clark. (Geoffrey Chapman; 10s. 6d.)

These two translations from the French make an interesting pair. Both are designed to teach the ordinary layman the place and meaning of the mass in his life. The first was written in the early stages of the liturgical movement in France by a parish priest who realized how difficult it was for the mass as usually celebrated to mean anything at all to the silent spectators who attended it. The second, published in 1954, is a series of sermons preached by a group of priests in a church where there are no silent spectators, but where the congregation avails itself of all that the liturgical revival offers to facilitate its participation. For Mgr Chevrot, as still for us in England, the sight of the faithful

taking an effective part in the holy sacrifice is one yet to be awaited. He is concerned to bring the ceremonies of the mass to life by showing his readers the significance they had for Christians of an earlier age. The book takes the form of a commentary explaining all the ceremonies of the mass, showing by frequent references to earlier practices what ought to be seen and understood in the now truncated rites. Unfortunately it makes heavy reading, and it is to be feared that many of those for whom the book is intended will be bored by the long descriptions of ancient ceremony. The fundamental notions of what the mass is and what part we have to take in it are swamped by so much interesting information. Nevertheless it provides a useful commentary, with clear explanations of difficult prayers, though it is a pity that its historical exposition is not more up to date. The book contains too many printer's errors, and on page 67 readers will be amused to find Prudentius referred to as 'the poetess Prudence'!

Very different is the approach of the priests of St Séverin. They have the great advantage that at their church much of the natural symbolism of the rites has been restored. They have no need of recourse to ancient practice to explain what the offertory is; their offertory procession speaks for itself. They are able to concentrate on putting across the basic ideas. The different themes of the offering of the Church, the sacrifice of Christ, our union with him in sacrifice and all the other important aspects of the mass are explained with a clarity and simplicity which makes these instructions a model for all who have to preach on the mass. Great emphasis is placed on the communal nature of our worship, but the personal element is in no way neglected. Readers are clearly told what is demanded of them by the mass and what it should mean to their everyday lives. Nor are these just words. The priests of St Séverin have succeeded in turning a difficult city parish into a Christian community which has won the admiration of Christians throughout Europe, and the bond which binds this community together is the mass. It is greatly to be hoped that many people in England will learn by reading this book to see their Sunday mass as the parishioners of St Séverin see it.

I have contrasted this book with Mgr Chevrot's, because as an explanation of the mass it is far better. It does not attempt to be a commentary, and those who wish to find out the meaning of prayers and ceremonies must go to Mgr Chevrot or to some more detailed commentary. It is an indication of the advance of the liturgical movement that this little book can give to its readers a clear explanation of what the mass is, without overburdening them with archaeology.

P.M.