

publishers would at least secure really good translators. Even the finest thought can be robbed of most of its effect if presented in totally unfitting dress. Miss Cobb's translation is worthy of Fr de Marchi's story.

H. C. GRAEF

CORPUS CHRISTI: Essays on the Church and the Eucharist. By E. L. Mascall. (Longmans; 15s.)

Dr Mascall is one of those Anglican writers for whom the inferiority of Catholic thought is not axiomatic; he treats impartially Anglican and Catholic alike, and it would be churlish to complain of his stimulating and friendly criticism even when it is directed at St Thomas. Though a treatment of the visible unity of the Mystical Body which fails to take account of the unique position of St Peter can hardly be considered adequate, interesting contributions are made to eucharistic theology which forms the main theme; and for those unacquainted with this complex subject the book will provide a useful introduction.

R.L.B.

A WRITER'S DIARY. By Virginia Woolf. (Hogarth Press; 18s.)

The technical problems of a writer are, like those of any craftsman, a mystery to the uninitiated. 'How is it done?' one wonders, and perhaps goes on to envy the flair that makes the difficult achievement seem so simple. Few writers in fact would admit their job to be an easy one, and an honest account of how a professional writer works is usually a record of grim concentration and a constant sense of failure. For the discipline of words is an unending battle with complacency; nothing is easier than to write fairly well, nothing is harder than the final triumph over the intractable jungle of speech.

Virginia Woolf was the most professional of writers, and her husband's selections from the diary she kept for twenty-five years reveal a woman who was wholly dedicated to her chosen work. Day after day we read of her meticulous regard for the words that are the writer's world: the constant re-writing, the mornings when only fifty words would emerge from all the struggling effort, the sense of futility that so much labour should bring so uncertain a reward. And, like most writers, she was always in need of understanding, if not of praise. ('Well, Morgan [E. M. Forster] admires. This is a weight off my mind.') The closed society of those who shared her ideas was everything for her. Her incursions into the vulgar world beyond it are often venomous and quite without the capacity of pity. There are, indeed, brilliant parentheses—her portrait of Thomas Hardy, her account of the London blitz—but her only happy territory is that of the writer

and of a special kind of writer—consciously apart from the gross concerns of mankind at large and with no need to apologize for feeling superior to them.

The madness which was never far from Virginia Woolf, and brought her at last to her tragic death, symbolized perhaps that terrifying 'otherness', translucent and marvellously fashioned, which is the mark of her writing. It can seem a refinement of perception which human nature in its earthy loyalties has no right to reach. It can seem angelically proud. But *A Writer's Diary* remains as impressive evidence of a single-mindedness and a verbal integrity that are rare at any time. One may suppose that this is a book that will last, and which will indeed outlast Virginia Woolf's novels, for in it device has not needed to destroy the givenness of experience.

I.E.

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON, a Historical and Doctrinal Survey. By R. V. Sellars. (S.P.C.K.; 37s. 6d.)

It is characteristic of the most recent trend in the study of the early Church that doctrinal controversies are no longer seen as merely accidental episodes in Christian history and even the most secular minded historian appreciates that the history of dogma is Christian history in that it records the impact of the Gospel on men's minds. Professor Sellars' valuable book on the Council of Chalcedon treats at length of the Christological controversies which shook early Christendom. It is a work of detailed, almost laborious, scholarship, and like so many works of a similar nature tends to be more informative than illuminating. For the student the section on the three Christological traditions—Alexandria, Antioch and the West—will prove helpful while the Church historian will find much of interest in the long chapter on the documents of Chalcedon and in the argument by which Professor Sellar indicates that the position of Chalcedon is not merely negative, but sums up, in a positive manner, the three great traditions. It is a work that should be in every seminary library.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.