

THE PAINTINGS OF ZURBARÁN. By Martin S. Soria. (Phaidon Press; £2 15s.)

The first thing to be said about any book from the Phaidon Press is praise for the completeness and excellence of the illustrations. As artist after artist is as it were canonized in the splendid series of Phaidon 'complete editions', the material for judgment (as far as reproduction can supply it) becomes available, and second-hand generalizations can give place to a detailed and authoritative guide to the whole body of an artist's work. This is especially important in the case of a painter such as Zurbarán, for few even are the professional art historians who can claim detailed acquaintance with the hundred and twenty or so collections drawn on here, ranging from the many private Spanish sources to galleries in Grenoble, Poznan, Leningrad, Buenos Aires and Philadelphia.

Francisco de Zurbarán has until lately been little enough appreciated in this country. He has been acknowledged as a master of the Spanish Baroque and has been readily labelled as 'the Spanish Caravaggio', but his inadequate representation in British collections has hindered close knowledge. Dr Soria, in an authoritative introduction, discusses the sources of his art, and apart from the obvious influences of Italian baroque painters and those of his Spanish contemporaries, Velázquez, Ribera and Murillo, he lays interesting stress on the effect on Zurbarán's inspiration of the painted and gilded wooden images which were a characteristic feature of the ecclesiastical art of Seville in the seventeenth century. Dr Soria detects five distinct stylistic periods in Zurbarán's work, leading from early realism to the 'mystic' style (best reflected in the seven paintings of Carthusian saints at Cadiz) and the 'solemn or classic' period of the 1640's, with the Murillesque mood of his later years as a gentle, softened epilogue.

Zurbarán's principal themes are wholly religious, and his numerous paintings of the Passion of Christ reflect a strong and entirely unsentimental faith. Like Murillo, he chose the Immaculate Conception as a frequent subject, but except in his last years there is little of Murillo's idealized sweetness. Zurbarán's greatest achievement lies in the series of paintings of saints. Here he reveals a contemplative absorption that seems to go as far as an artist's penetration may in giving a pictorial account of mystical prayer. For he does not paint martyrdoms or great events: his subjects are for the most part Carthusians (including martyrs indeed, as in the lovely painting of the English Blessed John Houghton, but formally represented as accepting martyrdom in his heart, with the rope loosely wound about his neck as symbol of his inner acceptance), Mercedarians and Dominicans (his Saint Louis Bertrand is a wonderful evocation of that superficially unattractive

saint, seen against a landscape that recalls his missionary apostolate). It is perhaps a coincidence that these religious orders have white as a principal colour (or lack of colour) in their dress, and this gives as it were repose and contemplative order to the paintings. Here one may without exaggeration discern the mystical genius of Spanish spirituality, intense yet disciplined; a fire that is always controlled.

There can be nothing but praise for this scholarly edition of Zurbaràn's paintings. Dr Soria writes with unquestioned authority, but he avoids the mandarin infallibility which the expert can so easily assume. His critical appreciation is not so absorbed in questions of source and influence that it cannot allow the fullest value to the religious inspiration that glows so surely in Zurbaràn's work. The catalogue (no. 5, cf. plate 18) gives an ambiguous description of 'The Apparition of the Virgin in Soriano', for the point here is the miraculous apparition of the image of St Dominic, traditionally brought through her instrumentality to the Dominican priory of Soriano in 1530. And the judgment of the Church is unintentionally anticipated in the description of Reginald of Orleans as 'Saint' in cat. no. 4 plate 19.

I.E.

HUGUENOT INFLUENCE IN SCOTLAND. By Arnold Fleming. (William Maclellan; 12s. 6d.)

In this book Mr Fleming has provided a series of linked studies of the Huguenots with special reference to their influence on Scottish life. Calvin and the great movement which he founded is throughout treated with an enthusiastic sympathy which has its own attraction. The effect of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes is examined in some detail and there is an interesting chapter on the Bible and the printing press. There is a section on the Flemish refugees. The book opens with chapters on the Auld Alliance and on Saint Bartholomew's Day. It is worth noting that the relations between Scottish Catholics and Presbyterians when living in France at the end of the sixteenth century were fairly close. This was in part due to the relaxation of hostility between the two religions which followed the accession of Henry IV. The names of Catholic and Presbyterian scholars are found side by side in the same *album amicorum*. There is scope for a detailed study of the Scottish ministers who served French congregations or taught at Saumur and Sedan. The prestige of Du Plessis Mornay stood very high in Scottish circles. Such subjects do not come within the scheme of the present volume. This book may best be considered as a series of tributes offered to the memory of the great Calvinist leaders. It is a deeply spontaneous work, marked by piety and sincerity.

D.M.