

patience and application, become an amateur expert in all these matters. Indeed, it is part of Mr Nicholl's thesis that there is *always*, or should be, an area of common ground between expert knowledge of this sort and the judgments that the non-expert is competent to make. The expert has not an unlimited authority. Without technical knowledge of Philosophy or Science, 'common sense' has a competence to make judgments, say, about the nature of man. One who knows the human reality through an experience of the joys and sorrows attendant on birth and death, and especially one in whose life there is the light of Faith and the forgiveness of sins, is living by intuitions that are untouchable by the views of Logical Positivists on the nature of truth or the views of the scientists on the origin of man.

However, the delineation of this common ground is obviously a matter of some delicacy, and since by definition it is the expert who is articulate, it is he who will be moved to question, not only the limits but the nature of the limits that are set to his authority.

MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

MAURICE OF SULLY AND THE MEDIEVAL VERNACULAR HOMILY. By C. A. Robson. (Blackwell; 25s.)

This study has a far wider significance than its title would suggest. It includes a critical edition of the sermons of Maurice de Sully, Bishop of Paris, preached between 1168 and 1175, together with detailed notes and glossary. But it also contains in eighty pages of compressed research enough material to form three separate monographs. The first would deal with the Parisian origins of prose and the learned use of the vernacular in twelfth and thirteenth century France and England. Here Mr Robson is at his most stimulating and least controversial. He is surely right in emphasising the importance of the administrative status acquired by the vernacular in the thirteenth century and its new dignity as a court language. An interesting parallel can be developed from thirteenth-century Castile and it might be suggested that this would lead inevitably to class dialects cutting across topographical divisions and perhaps too often ignored by philologists. So much turns on the exact character of the publics who listened in twelfth-century France or England to the de Sully homilies or the Garnier life of St Thomas of Canterbury or the romances of Hue de Rolelande. Clearly a greater power of concentration and a deeper pleasure in the sententious was always needed by those who listened to prose. Mr Robson suggests that Maurice de Sully preached to his fellow councillors and the burgesses and his sermons seem essentially a learned exercise in Victorine exegesis.

A second monograph would be a development of the author's re-assessment of the intellectual movements in the Paris Schools of the twelfth century. In contrast to the current reaction against the Abelard

myth Mr Robson emphasises the iridescent personality that is presupposed by it and he finds the norm of medieval thought in the concept of the microcosm 'the minute form which preserves its autonomy within the whole because it is the reflection of the whole'.

The third monograph would deal with the evolution of the sermon form and with the contrast between the patristic and early medieval homily, essentially liturgical in context and expository in form and the extra-liturgical exhortation enriched by '*exempla*' so popular among late medieval audiences. It is very seldom that so much manuscript research in so many fields has been distilled into a single volume, or that so much patient scholarship is found combined with so much vivid originality of thought. Mr Robson has provided one of the most stimulating of recent contributions to twelfth-century studies.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

HISTORY, CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE. By F. R. Cowell. (A. and C. Black; 21s.)

THE SHORTER CAMBRIDGE MEDIAEVAL HISTORY. By C. W. Previté-Orton. (Cambridge University Press; 55s.)

The number of books about history, its nature and philosophy, that have appeared in recent years is a result, presumably, both of the great crisis of humanity that has arisen in our days and of the modern scientific study of man's behaviour. Mr Cowell's book is a summary of one of the most massive attempts to probe the secret of human society, the great work of Professor Sorokin's called *Social and Cultural Dynamics*.

There is much that is unattractive in Professor Sorokin's analysis, especially his vocabulary. He details three general systems of human culture that occur in the course of history and archaeology, calling them the ideational, the idealistic and the sensate types. In the former, sense of corporate unity and of spiritual values is high; in the latter, one has individualism and addiction to material satisfaction. The idealistic is a balance between these opposing cultures. A whole complex of characteristics in art, law, psychology, philosophy, etc., springs from these root ideas, and it is peculiar to Professor Sorokin that he has evolved an elaborate statistical method of proving that his analysis is correct. The groups of figures and graphs are rather repellent but he claims with some justice that they are preferable to the average historian's assertion of 'trends' towards this and that at certain times. He would admit that the ultimate reason for the emergence of sensate or ideational cultures eludes his method; but he does claim with some right that his analysis is experimentally justified. The patterns he detects in history are not purely subjective.

*The Shorter Cambridge Mediaeval History* follows the course of humanity from the days of Constantine to the days of Columbus. A sensate culture collapses, an ideational one arises and is passing through an