

REVIEWS

THEOLOGY

SAINT AUGUSTINE ON ETERNAL LIFE. By D. J. Leahy, D.D., Ph.D. (Burns Oates; 5s.)

We venture to call this an ideal doctorate thesis. It is compact and readable though discussing profound theological problems. The author shows that he has read a great deal in St. Augustine, and is well acquainted with the literature of the points with which he deals. The chapters deal in turn with (a) St. Augustine's idea of the purpose of human life—in the words of the Catechism: To know Him, love Him and serve Him and to be happy with Him in the next world; (b) Life Abundant, or the Beatific Vision; (c) The Perfect Life in Body and Soul.

The chapter on the purpose of life calls for a discussion of the notions of the Neoplatonists. Here, we feel, Dr. Leahy does less than justice to Plotinus. For (p. 41) he says: 'In Plotinus' philosophy there was no mention made of man's love towards God,' and he quotes Dean Inge (pp. 130-131): 'Plotinus' spiritual world is to be a world of life, activity and ceaseless creativeness. But as the apex of a dialectical pyramid it may even seem almost forbidding. If the soul on getting there were to say "I see all to admire, but nothing to love," what answer should be made?' Now Dr. Leahy implies that there is no answer, and that in Plotinus' view there was no question of love for God. Yet on the very same page (131) Inge quotes Plotinus as saying: 'It is then that the soul takes fire and is carried away by love. The fullest life is the fullest love; and the love comes from the celestial light which streams forth from the Absolute One, the Absolute Good' (*Ennead* VI, vii, 23). And a little further on Inge says that for Plotinus: 'The "Spirit in love" is the culmination of personal religion.' We must not quote further, but there can be no question that in the mind of Plotinus the Vision of God demanded love of Him as its previous condition and found its fullest expression in what that great philosopher may well have spoken of as 'ecstatic love'; 'unquestionably a genuine experience of his own,' says the Dean.

For Augustine, of course, that vision was not merely an intellectual gaze but an act of the will; it was an act of the whole man, body as well as soul with its faculties. In one place indeed Augustine might seem to lend countenance to the notion beloved of Pope John XXII, who would have liked to maintain

that there was no Beatific Vision until the resurrection when for the first time man would be complete, body reunited to soul. Further, Augustine certainly seems to have held that Moses and St. Paul beheld the very essence of God, though, as St. Thomas points out, since that vision carried with it no promise of permanence it must have lacked one of the essential features of Beatific Vision, and therefore cannot have fully satisfied the cravings of the will. But a further question arises: Did St. Augustine hold that a man could, while still on earth, arrive at the intuitive vision of God by prayer and contemplation? Great names are quoted in the affirmative. Yet it is hard to justify it, and Dr. Leahy is against it. In the reviewer's own mind the notion runs counter to the whole of St. Augustine's mind, and recent attempts to treat the famous vision at Ostia as a glimpse of the Being of God seem to us regrettable.

Dr. Leahy's little volume will, we hope, introduce others to the great Doctor of the West, the ideal pastor of souls who preached more consistently on heaven and the duty as well as the joy of looking forward to the 'Fatherland,' as he always calls it, than any other of the Fathers of the Church.

HUGH POPE, O.P.

DE CO-OPERATIONE IMMEDIATA MATRIS REDEMPTORIS AD REDEMPTIONEM OBJECTIVAM. By Werner Goossens. (Desclée de Brouwer.)

Genuine piety and right devotion rest on truth. This has been the guiding principle of the author in the writing of this book on Our Lady. His purpose is by narrowing down his subject to the fixed limits of the title, to clarify the problem discussed by theologians regarding the exact nature of the Blessed Virgin's partnership in the redemptive work of her Son. We are glad to notice that he endorses the conclusions of Canon Smith, whose excellent work has received favourable notice in *BLACKFRIARS* (April 1938), but finds himself in disagreement with the more extreme view of some other authors.

Redemption is considered in a twofold manner; objectively, meaning the payment of the price whereby grace is made available to mankind, and subjectively, meaning the distribution and the application by intercession of the fruits derived from the redemptive sacrifice. The author rightly sees the gravest difficulties in allowing an immediate co-operation by Our Lady in the work of Redemption in the objective sense. Such a co-operation would involve an adding by Our Lady to the price paid by Christ Our Lord. The customary arguments advanced