

## BLACKFRIARS

posed that these immense numbers imply that the natives, excited by his vehement preaching, were baptized without instruction, and therefore without understanding the real nature of their act. It was, on the contrary, remarked by all who came across the converts of St. Lewis that they were thoroughly instructed in the Christian truths, and that they persevered with constancy in the true Faith" (*Life of St. Lewis Bertrand*, p. 169; Burns & Oates, 1882). Moreover, if exception be taken to the many baptisms of St. Lewis, what must be said of the far greater number administered by St. Vincent Ferrer, and the two glorious Jesuit missionaries St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Claver? Of the latter it is related that during the long course of his missionary labours he baptized no less than three hundred thousand negroes. There is no need to dwell on the "wholesale baptisms" of the Irish by St. Patrick, of the Franks by St. Remigius, and of the English by SS. Augustine and Paulinus.

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

WRESTLERS WITH CHRIST. By Karl Pflieger. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

It is sometimes said that Communism is directed against pseudo-Christianity rather than against Christ and authentic Christianity. Whether this estimate of Marxism be accepted with or without qualification is not here under discussion, but it must occur again and again to the reader of the English translation of Pflieger's *Geister die um Christus ringen*, the German version of which was reviewed in BLACKFRIARS in May, 1935.

As Catholics or as Orthodox six of the seven characters represented in its pages have this at least in common, that in no wise are they unvital, in no wise pseudo-Christian. Even to the seventh, André Gide, is the epithet inapplicable. He fought, he was given the victory—in his *Si le Grain ne Meurt*—and in the lull that follows battle, lost the Faith under the influence of the upraised Hammer and Sickle. Yet he, no more than Judas, is the type of the pseudo-Christian. Despair and hate are vices too capital for the shallows of the spiritual bourgeois. "But because you are neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth." So from these seven essays we are reminded of that fundamental truth that the measure of the height, the depth, and the breadth of our spiritual life is relative to our realization of Christ, our awareness of Him, and the angle of our Godwardness. Wrestle with Him, follow Him, flee Him, even deny Him, and yet in all these is He the object of our lives. Only when He is ignored or, worse, when His Name is prostituted by the world, do we see the apparel of the pseudo-Christian. These men, one and all, were aware of the long pursuit of the soul by God, and it is in this fact that the value of the book lies.

## REVIEWS

The author gives us so many good things, both the fruit of his own thought and quotations from his Wrestlers. In the prefatory essay, we are given a paragraph, on page 27, that is the keynote of the whole book: "The Church cannot be identified, without qualification, with the Christian world." It was in facing this apparent contradiction that Bloy, especially, had his greatest difficulty. Yet even with him there was a realization of the true implication of Catholic Action, long years before Pope Pius had set the laity of the world on fire for that apostolate. "With his intensely vital Catholic sentiment, it was impossible for Bloy to doubt that the universal priesthood of Christians left a place in the Church beside the official priesthood for the layman who preaches religious truth and ministers to souls. It is a view which has been officially sanctioned by the summons to Catholic Action. Every man in the Catholic camp, Bloy replied to his opponents, has his mission. Why should I alone have none?" Then we have a glimpse of Bloy in Catholic Action. Catholic thought owes Maritain to Bloy, under grace. To his home travel soul-troubled pilgrims half across Europe, and find with him the health they have been looking for. Wagner arouses in another a hunger for the Absolute, but it is Bloy who leads him to God. Nor need we wonder at this, for Bloy matched his sympathy with a profundity that astonishes. One at least of his aphorisms deserves to be pondered on: "Prayer is the work of free men, as work is the prayer of slaves."

A last word in general. . . . Is the attraction of these frequently published essays on literary men, whether examining their works or gauging their souls, an indication of modern sloth and superficiality? A critical essay is valuable either as a corrective to one's own less wise judgments of an author read and studied, or as an incentive to become acquainted with a writer. It must be apparent even to the superficial observer that this is becoming less and less the case. A large body of readers is growing up who have no abashment in discussing the opinions and characters of authors of whose works they have read not even a page. The name of Péguy has been bandied about by many whose eyes have never read a sentence of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*. In moderation, as keeping up with the reading capacity of its clients, a publishing firm does well to satisfy the ever present demand for the critical essay, but there is reason to believe that this type of publication is too prevalent at the moment.

ARTHUR FRESSANGES.

## MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

The Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas was founded by Pope Leo XIII in 1880 with the aim of fostering, expounding, defending and promoting the philosophical teaching of St. Thomas according to the prescriptions and rules laid down in the famous