

## BLACKFRIARS

Lord's objective was the *Ecclesia* of mankind, a living organism, and His Law its constitution; that the Spirit was to guide the Church as such; that the old law of social justice was not abrogated but changed and perfected; that therefore Dr. Niebuhr's interpretations are possible only on the theory of a self-contradiction on the part of Our Lord. Again, with regard to his indictment of orthodoxy, one would argue, on similar lines, that what is attributable to the betrayal of Christians must not be attributed to the Church of Christ as such: that "sacramentalism," pessimism, acosmism, are indeed to be found in fact among Christians, but very definitely not in Christianity, and that it is not the traditional teaching which is wrong, but the practice.

Impossible, on the other hand, to do justice to the value of the book: first, as an outstanding presentation of a point of view which is coming to be more and more widely held; secondly, as a penetrating discussion and criticism of the deepest elements, and their manifestations, in our world; lastly, as a salutary shock to our complacency, for it brings home very forcibly and uncomfortably the fact that it is only the un-Christian behaviour of Christians that makes possible an indictment which on questions of historical fact is so unassailable.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

## LITURGY

THE HOLY SACRIFICE. A simple Explanation of the Mass. By Rt. Rev. Fernand Cabrol, O.S.B., Abbot of Farnborough. Translated by C. M. Antony. (Burns Oates; 2/6.)

Many liturgical studies fail because they lapse into a craze for hunting up old manuscripts and a veneration for the ancient merely because it is ancient. They produce the type of liturgist who will fight to the death for Gothic chasubles, the only apparent reason being that they were worn in the fifth century. And this in turn produces the reactionary who calls himself a *theologian* of the Mass and condemns all history and the evidence it affords, saying we must get back to principles—and, presumably, stay there! In this book we find neither of these views even in their milder forms, but rather an admirable synthesis of those two very necessary elements in liturgical study, together with the realization that the study of the Mass, and, indeed, of all liturgy, lies neither in *mere* history nor *mere* theology—if such things do exist—but in the happy co-operation of the two.

This book is an attempt to popularize some of those liturgical researches which up to now have been made intelligible only to the technical scholar. As a rule efforts of this kind are ruined by superficiality and incompleteness:

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and this is especially a danger in research on this subject which is at once complex and in many cases obscure. There are, however, no such blemishes in this work; it is thorough, complete and balanced. The author sets out in full the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin and English, and also the four passages from the New Testament which tell of the institution of the Eucharist together with an exegesis of them. In the body of the book there is an excellent summary of the doctrine of the twofold nature of the Mass as sacrament and sacrifice, followed by a historico-theological study of the prayers of the Ordinary of the Mass, showing their origins and inter-connection. Finally the rites of Pontifical Mass, Solemn Mass and Low Mass are explained, and two brief appendices are given on liturgical books and modern literature on the subject.

The form of the book makes it of necessity brief and succinct, and thus there are frequently phrases full of meaning which will become clear and fully understood only after re-reading and pondering; and for this purpose the text of the Ordinary of the Mass will prove invaluable for reference. Though in places more recondite questions have of necessity been laid aside, this does not leave one dissatisfied, for the crucial point of each of these questions is mentioned, and so the book as it stands is complete. It may indeed serve to whet the appetite for more specialized study, and for those who wish to delve deeper there is an exhaustive bibliography. The translation too is pleasing. It reads well in an easy graceful style, and the French seldom peeps through.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**THE INTERPRETATION OF PLAINCHANT. A Preliminary Study.** By Alec Robertson, A.R.A.M., Chaplain of Westminster Cathedral. (Oxford University Press; 5/-.)

The plain man has little use for plain chant. Despite the part it plays in the Liturgy and the positive recommendations of two Popes it leaves the ordinary Catholic cold: if pressed on the subject he may exhibit a warm antagonism. Even with those who are well disposed there is a latent suspicion that the chant remains the darling of the expert, the plaything of the aesthete, or the monopoly of the musical archæologist. It is the fruit of a culture which affords no relish to present-day palates; its melodic and modal genius make no direct appeal to an ear attuned to modern scales and harmony; its rhythm (still the subject of hot disputes among the pundits) is to say the least difficult, and often seems to clash with the sonorous march of the liturgical text it partners; its rendering in many cases gives rise to a sense of despondency, and at times acute irritation. Does the fault of all this rest with the chant itself, with those who interpret or teach it,