

Blackfriars

of the heroine seems rather cheap and pointless. Miss Smith has literary ability, and if she writes her stories without prejudice she will give us the kind of Catholic novel that is wanted.

R.R.

RELIGIONS OF AUTHORITY AND THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT, WITH OTHER ESSAYS APOLOGETICAL AND CRITICAL. By Dom Cuthbert Butler. (Sheed & Ward, 1930; pp. 190; 5/-.)

Very rarely can it be the case that essays written between twenty-five and thirty-five years ago can be so well worth re-printing as these by Abbot Butler. The first essay gives its title to the whole collection and is an examination of the teachings of Auguste Sabatier in his *Réligions d'Autorité et la Réligion de l'Esprit*, 1904. Abbot Butler shews how like and yet how unlike to Catholicism are the views put forward by Sabatier, how he accepts practically everything for which Catholics had in the past to fight, yet how completely his views cut the ground from under the feet of the Catholic apologist by offering a purely naturalistic account of what he concedes to be facts of history. But is it possible to maintain any truly Catholic position without the basis of dogmatic definition? The Essay on *The Modern Critical and Historical School* was originally a lecture delivered to the Historical Research Society in 1898, but is as full of interest to-day as it was thirty years ago; it sketches the lines on which modern investigations in New Testament study, Ecclesiastical History and Christian origins have been pursued. The third paper deals in the main with Harnack's handling of the problems presented by early Christian literature. As this paper was contributed to the *Dublin Review* so far back as 1899 it unfortunately gives Harnack's earlier and not his later views. It is a pity that these were not stated in an appendix, for, as everyone knows, the great critic radically changed his opinions on the dating of the New Testament books, see his *Date of the Acts and Synoptic Gospels*, translated into English in 1911. This renders the otherwise interesting Chronological Tables given on pp. 99-104 useless. But the paper on *Bishop Lightfoot and the Early Roman See*, though written as far back as 1893, remains as fresh and valuable as ever. The volume closes with two new papers, one on the so-called answer to Mr. Vernon Johnson's *One Lord, One Faith*, and the other on Frederick von Hugel, reprinted from the *Tablet* of February 14th, 1925.

The Abbot writes with the ease and simplicity begotten of real familiarity with his subject. He shows us how, while the attack on Christianity is perpetually shifting its ground, the

Catholic apologist has no need to change his weapons, though he has to direct them against assailants who always seem to imagine that they have said the last word. He also shows how fatally easy it is to let those same weapons get rusty, how easy to fancy that the defence which proved effective fifty years ago will be equally forceful now. We need no change in our principles, but if we are to use them effectively we have to be abreast of the times and possess an intimate knowledge of the trend of modern thought.

H.P.

THE ART OF MENTAL PRAYER. By Rev. Bede Frost. With an Introduction by the Rt. Rev. Abbot of Pershore. (Philip Allan; 8/6.)

Almost complete unfamiliarity with High Anglican books of devotion must, presumably, have lain at the root of the pleasant surprise which this book brought me. It is very good; and this not merely on account of the author's wise plan of allowing so many of the very best and authoritative Catholic writers to speak for themselves, but also on account of his own contribution. His chapters on *What is the Christian Life?* and *The 'Gap' in the Religious Situation of To-day*, are excellent; the latter especially so: and when, in *Part III, Explanations*, he speaks of *Some Chief Difficulties of Mental Prayer*, his handling of *Temptations* is all one could wish for. The central portion of the book is taken up with a very succinct review of the Ignatian, Franciscan, Carmelite, Salesian, Liguorian and Oratorian methods of prayer: but are the Dominicans, then, so colourless that he can afford to neglect them?

My criticism of the book would equally hold for many on the same subject written by Catholics. Why stress the difficulty of Mental Prayer? Is it difficult to learn to ride a horse? Not a bit—as I can testify from experience. Once sufficiently mastered, an increase of proficiency can go on indefinitely. Why do so few people know how to ride? Because they don't want to learn. It is just the same with prayer. Get people to *want to pray*, and, as Père Grou says somewhere, the rest will follow. Then the eternal division into *schools* and *methods*. For myself I think it overdone. Just as no two persons walk exactly alike—witness the unending drilling of the Guards—so no two persons pray alike, however identical the *method* they follow. Yet, broadly speaking, the exercise of walking is, in most people, the same: and so will true prayer be. There is far more similarity than divergence in all the various *schools* and *methods*, and meticulous dissection tends only to confuse.