

Blackfriars

revival of the old individualistic eremitic type of monasticism, and the former being social in its essence. The fact that there are material borrowings from Benedictine observances and that their end is the same really proves nothing. The end of all religious orders, as indeed of all Christians, is the same—the twofold love of God and their neighbour: it is by the means taken that they vitally differ.

The second element of a history is the reconstruction of its relics. That particular group of human beings must be made to live again, and not just photographically, but as seen in their full significance and inner meaning. This requires not merely the facts but also an imaginative perception of the facts. It is history as an art, and only as such can it have a compelling interest. We cannot admit that Miss Thompson has secured this achievement. Learned, accurate, critical—her book lacks *life*. Certainly a difficult task with a subject so retiring and unostentatious. But that group of figures who passed through this world in the Middle Ages were men and have all the interest and fascination of humanity. And if the historian is to hold us it is just that that he must recapture. This book has laid the foundation: someone else must build.

A.M.

THE PRAYER OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS. By Dom Fernan Cabrol, O.S.B. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 5/-).

What is the purpose of such a book as this? Let us at least be clear as to what its purpose is not. The liturgical movement is not an attempt to reproduce in their material integrity, the forms of a past age. That would be still more stupid and calamitous than even the Gothic revival. Liturgy is not archaeology. We study the early liturgies because they are the classics of Christian prayer. A book is a classic because it is the perfect expression of a perfect idea. We reach that idea through its material expression. But just as it would be fatal to imagine that the mechanical repetition of classic phrases would assist us in forming a style of our own, so of the early Christian prayers it is not their material statement we wish to memorise, it is the idea, the energy, the *spirit* behind them that we seek.

What was the characteristic which made that early prayer so tremendously alive? It is, of course, the spirit of Christ, of *Christus totus*—to use St. Augustine's phrase, Head and members. There was a vigorous awareness of the fact that Christian prayer is with Christ and through Christ, and that since the Body of Christ is one—united in the Head and among the mem-

bers—it has one voice, one prayer. No Christian can pray alone, he is part of a living praying organism. Our so-called private prayers are in reality social prayers, an utterance of that Body to which we are indissolubly united. So conscious were the early Christians of this fact that following the Lord's own Prayer, they instinctively used the plural. *We* praise thee O God. It is the mission of the liturgical movement to bring again this corporate sense. Eaten up by individualism Western men have developed a philosophy of isolation in which a man glories in the pride of a jungle-like loneliness. And there is no remedy in the panaceas of rationalism. Only an acceptance of a new life in Christ can revivify. That is what makes so unpretentious a book so important.

A.M.

ESSAYS IN ORDER :

- (1) RELIGION AND CULTURE. By Jacques Maritain. With a General introduction to Essays in Order by Christopher Dawson.
- (2) CRISIS IN THE WEST. By Peter Wust. With an introduction by E. I. Watkin.
- (3) CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW AGE. By Christopher Dawson. (Sheed & Ward ; 2/6 each).

Bare potentiality towards truth is more hopeful than an actual encumbrance with falsehood. The breakdown of conventional religion and unintellectual ethic has brought the Catholic new possibilities of apostolate and a new responsibility. *Essays in Order* set out 'to face the problems which arise from this new situation,' to take the field in the cause of 'the return to the real and the absolute, by the way of intelligence, for the primacy of the spirit.'

Religion and Culture, a fine essay in fundamentals, the introduction to the series of *Questions Disputées* recently inaugurated in France by Maritain and Journet, sums up M. Maritain's position in his valiant campaign for truth : the true meaning of civilisation, humanist, spiritual ; the place of religion as its super-natural governing factor. The third chapter outlines the true policy of Catholic apologetic. (God grant, *inter alia*, the Catholic press may ponder these principles.)

The second essay is prefaced by an introduction to Wust's philosophy, correlating it with that of Wordsworth and Blake, Ruskin, Patmore and D. H. Lawrence. The Thomist will hail Wust's insistence on the need, besides the discursive reason, of