

is unquestionably more far-reaching than the significance of his own personality; as a person he is merely an intermediary. This is not to say that he is deprived of intelligence, but it is to say that there was nothing of the genius about him. Even the very composition of his works betrays the woolliness of his thought; and not the least of the author's merit lies in having followed the details of these writings and, further, in having succeeded in presenting them in a clear form and a readily assimilable order. With regard to the great Benedictine legislation, for all that it owed so much to him, Cassian remains ever the adept of oriental monasticism. He had enough good sense to know that the West could not absorb this type of spirituality straight off, and yet his only *lumen* is the ideal of the Fathers of the Desert. The temperament which he brought to the task, the adaptations which he suggested, were imposed on him by necessity and not by the afflatus of any new spiritual inspiration. St Benedict was perhaps a revolutionary; Cassian never even dreamed of being one. What exactly his achievement and his intentions were are here admirably described with an erudition which makes his book indispensable for understanding the transference of Oriental ideas to the West and the recasting which they had to undergo.

I would make only one reservation about this book. 'Cassian', says the author, 'ceaselessly reiterated that you cannot understand the monastic life unless you are attempting to live it' (p. 47). Cassian is exaggerating, but it remains true that an understanding of monasticism, so it seems to me, demands a theologian's viewpoint. Christian monasticism is too essential to the Christian religion itself for the historian to approach it as though it were merely an historical accident or a secondary phenomenon of Christianity. While it may be thought that the historian's angle of approach allows greater objectivity and offers a better discernment of the origins and antecedents of the monastic movement, such an approach runs the risk of missing what is essential. Mr Chadwick seems to me not entirely to have escaped this danger. However, he has seen well enough throughout the *De Incarnatione* how profoundly it was that Christianity formed the inspiration of a Cassian. Still, no injustice is done him by regretting that he has not applied more profoundly to his book the incontestable gifts as a theologian which he reveals in his chapter on the semi-Pelagian controversy.

H. DE RIEDMATTEN, O.P.

L'ASSEMBLÉE CHRÉTIENNE A L'ÂGE APOSTOLIQUE. By Henri Chirat.
(Lex Orandi, 10. Les Editions du Cerf. n.p.)

As M. Chirat promises in his preface, this book summarises all that the New Testament and the early writings of Christianity can tell us

of the Christian assembly. The inquiry is carried out with patience and diligence, the texts being studied in a scholarly fashion, and they are never forced. What is to be praised above all else is the astonishing mastery of the scriptural material; here the liturgist and the historian will find an almost complete collection of the passages relevant to the liturgical meeting, the organisation and functions of the 'ekklesia'. No Christian could fail to profit by such a true contact with his brethren of long ago. He will feel how close he is to them, and at the same time he will admire the prodigious vitality of the Church, manifested in the developments worked out from primitive times under the inspiration of the Spirit. M. Chirat quotes almost entirely from the original sources; this is not to say that his inquiry has depended exclusively on these. In his references to recent works, M. Chirat sometimes expounds theses which are not his own, and sometimes he does not trouble to state his reasons for accepting them; at other times he leaves the proposition in its hypothetical state. Thus he chooses a later date for the *Didache*, he accepts the thesis of Nautin on the third part of the Creed, he opts for a plural episcopacy at the beginning, but these points bear consequences which are too serious to allow of their being propounded as simple affirmations—even (or rather, especially) in a work of popularisation. On p. 183 with reference to the formula of Eucharistic consecration he says: 'It is not impossible that the words of our Lord in some districts may have been omitted for a period'. This seems to me to be historically hypercritical and theologically difficult to defend. M. Chirat has himself drawn attention to what runs counter to such an hypothesis, namely the liturgical structure of the recital of the institution which is so striking in the scriptural texts. It is true that the Council of Trent has not defined the sacramental form of the Eucharist, but *Salvo meliori iudicio* I think I am not mistaken in supposing like so many others that the doctrine is at least *proxima fidei*. With these reservations I would recommend the book as a most practical and useful guide and fit to be of great profit to non-specialists.

H. DE RIEDMATTEN, O.P.

THOUGHTS FOR MEDITATION. An Anthology selected and arranged by N. Gangulee. With a foreword by T. S. Eliot. (Faber; 9s. 6d.)

Mr Eliot in his foreword rightly warns the reader of this anthology against the danger of treating all the religions here represented as being the same in their essential 'mystical' approach to God. But both Mr Eliot and the compiler of the anthology seem to fall into an equally pernicious form of indifferentism by suggesting that the climber towards perfection will only be successful in so far as he gives himself wholeheartedly and with utter conviction to whatever religious belief