

thing definitely worth saying and he emphasises a point that theologians have neglected, namely the eschatological aspect of the atonement. His analysis of the doctrine as understood by St. John, St. Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is arresting and original, and is the best part of the book.

*Christ the Beginning* is based on talks broadcast by the headmaster of Harrow. It begins with a jejune and diluted presentation of Christ's temptation in the desert, but improves as it proceeds. There is little strict theology in it, but it finds its usefulness in the moral disquisitions or comments on certain ideas taken from Christ's teaching. Hence the book does not centre round the person of Christ as one might be led to expect by the title, but revolves about ideas taken from the Gospel. These ideas are practical, and what the author has to say is wise and humane and tinged with the sympathy born of suffering and experience. The Christianity it teaches, however, is a facile and somewhat shallow christianity, in which the hard sacrifices and the lofty ideals of the Gospel are glossed over. But this does not mean that it will not appeal to and be of assistance to many inquiring people.

H.T.

TRAITE DE L'UNION A DIEU. Jean de Castel. DOCTRINE SPIRITUELLE. Louis Lallemand. (Editions de L'Arbre. Montreal. n.p.).

The first of these books was formerly attributed to Saint Albert the Great, but has now been accepted as the work of a fifteenth century Benedictine. Like other writings of the later Middle Ages, it is a compilation from older writers like Cassian, Saint Bernard, Hugh of Saint Victor and Saint Bonaventure, and hence reflects the traditions and spirituality of an earlier age, modified somewhat by the *Devotio Moderna*. It is extremely condensed, full of common sense, logical, and eminently suitable for the purpose it has in view. It is not a book for people who lack earnestness and resolution. In its uncompromising demand it reminds one of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, though couched in a less formidable tone. Nevertheless it postulates in those who read it the highest ideals and an extreme spirit of renunciation. In style it is simple and sententious, like the *Imitation*, but its naïveté and unpretentious directness are none the less penetrating and revealing.

The second book belongs to a quite different tradition. Lallemand, born 1578, was one of the most original of the seventeenth century spiritual writers, and an outstanding member of the Society of Jesus. This book does not contain any particular treatise by him, but provides an anthology from his conferences, arranged to give a comprehensive view of the spiritual life. It

is simple and direct, and should be most useful to all classes of readers. By the publication of both these books the Dominicans of Canada have made a good beginning in their collection of spiritual texts, and one hopes that equally successful efforts will be made to continue the good work. H.T.

THE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH RECLUSE. By Francis D. S. Darwin, F.R.Hist.S. (S.P.C.K.; 6s.).

Whether this book be read as an attempt to explain the medieval English recluse to the Englishman of the twentieth century or as an historical record it is unsatisfactory. For the author has not grasped the underlying principle of the contemplative vocation, of which life as a recluse is a form. The trouble indeed goes deeper than that as two quotations from his appraisal of the *Ancren Riwele* show: "With lips repeating prayers and devotional ejaculations from the moment of rising and from the time of 'putting on shoes and clothes', the three Anchoresses found themselves reduced to a position resembling rather too closely that of praying automata mechanically performing certain ritualistic acts . . . None of the prayers recommended for private devotion can be described as particularly edifying . . ." (Page 25). Some twelve pages further on we are treated to the same ideas in other words, with the Anglican Book of Common Prayer dragged in. One may wonder what the medieval recluse would have made of this book for his Devotions. "Yet the strange fact emerges that it never seems to have dawned on medieval ecclesiastics that the extremes of physical asceticism which they themselves deprecated flowed largely from their own devotional systems with their vain repetitions, the ecstatic and ejaculatory tone of the prayers and the acts of adoration, and in general the lack of that *sobriety* so characteristic of the Anglican Prayer Book—aggravated all of it by insistence on recital of the Hours (including the Night Office) even by Recluses."

A careful reading of the *Ancren Riwele* or St. Ailred's *De Vita Eremitica* gives an entirely different impression. It appears that the author has approached his subject with certain preconceived notions. That, consequently, he sums up the function of the recluse on the one hand as superficially analogous to the Buddhist praying wheel, and on the other as a sort of oracle need not surprise us.

There is a wealth of references to printed sources; no manuscript ones seem to have been consulted. The publishers have adopted the objectionable habit of producing on the jacket an interesting illustration (taken from a French manuscript) which does not appear in the book, which is unillustrated. L.C.S.