

BLACKFRIARS

Tillemont, *La Paix Constantienne à la mort de Thèodose* seems a fitting development of the temper and of the method of Mgr. Duchesne.

It is divided according to the plan familiarized in England by the *Cambridge Medieval History*. J. R. Palanque contributes the sections on the relation between Church and State and on the development of diocesan organization and of the missions beyond the borders of the Empire. Gustave Bardy deals with Arianism and its reactions. Pierre de Labriolle analyses fourth century Christian culture and life and spirituality. Each section begins with an elaborate bibliography, each statement is carefully referenced. Naturally the value is uneven. Thus the bibliographies are admirable for French publications, adequate for German, notably feeble for English; there are hardly any references to Anglican scholars and it is characteristic that Abbot Butler is referred to as Dom Cuthbert Burkitt. But this could be attributed to the insulation of English scholarship and that is an anachronism for which English scholars are primarily responsible. Again, this volume remains a chronicle of effects rather than a study of causes. There are exceptions in individual instances; the religious factors that led to Julian's reaction, the motives that caused Constantine's "conversion," the sentiments that developed the cult of relics, are all analysed clearly, undogmatically and, at least in the first case, with due sympathy. But the treatment of the changing phases of Neo-Platonism is quite inadequate, there is no reference to the economic factors which were to transform the cultural life of the Mediterranean world or to the central problem in the history of the Christian East, the slow transition from Hellenism to Byzantinism in spiritual teaching, in art-forms and in theology. Yet these omissions in part at least result from the most valuable of the qualities illustrated by this volume; a concentration on events as they happened rather than as they should have happened, a refusal to pigeon-hole the individually unique, a meticulous sense of detailed fact and the carefully sceptical weighing of primary sources. It is a relief to review a Church history so unbiassed, so tentative, and so sane.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

PRISCILLIEN ET L'ESPAGNE CHRETIENNE A LA FIN DU IVE SIECLE.
By Adhémar D'Alès. (Beauchesne; 12 frs.)

This is a revised edition of articles that appeared in *Recherches de Science religieuse* in 1933 and is very welcome.

Priscillian's tragic end at the hands of the civil authorities of Treves in the autumn of A.D. 386 combined with the pseudo-mysticism attaching to his name has invested him with a spurious

REVIEWS

glamour. The fact, too, that such Saints as St. Martin of Tours and St. Ambrose strove their utmost to stave off his dreadful fate lends additional interest to his story. Until 1885 Sulpicius Severus was practically our sole authority for the events of the trial. But in that year a number of documents were discovered which were supposed to be Priscillian's own defence against his accusers at the Council of Saragossa; they are now known to have been written by Instantius, one of Priscillian's supporters who had in some way secured for him the Bishopric of Avila.

Of more importance than the history of this wretched affair is the doctrinal position of Priscillian and his followers. St. Jerome seems to have known little about it, and when Orosius wrote to ask St. Augustine for information the latter then knew little more than that they held that it was not always wrong to lie, and he quotes their slogan: "Jura, perjura; secretum prodere noli." But as time went on Augustine, with his insatiable desire to know all that false teachers were saying, learned more and more about that strange mysticism which was "Priscillianism."¹ Amongst other weird notions they held that true doctrine was only to be found in the apocryphal writings. It sounds well nigh incredible but when we read that at the Last Supper Our Lord and the Apostles went out "Hymno dicto" these cranks pinned their faith to that Hymn which they found ready to their hands in the spurious *Acts of St. John* written some two hundred years earlier. They had strange views too on the origin of the soul and on the nature of the Angels.

Fr. D. Alès' study affords us an insight into the strange mystical tendencies which seem to have pervaded Spain in the fourth century and which centre round the name of Priscillian.

HUGH POPE, O.P.

APOLOGETICS

THE DIVINE CHRIST. By A. E. Baker. (Centenary Press, 8/6.)

As an accumulation of evidence this book is convincing. As a theoretical analysis of the meaning of that evidence it is pathetically disappointing. That is to say, the positive material is excellent but the metaphysical fragments as they stand could well have been cut right out. For unless the inter-articulated framework of Christian evidences is to be traced right back to the first principles of being and human knowledge, then the apologetic treatment must surely be confined to the massing up of historic data; in which case the unconscious ingenuity of inquisitive human minds may be trusted to ferret out the intricate network of major premisses, resolvable to first principles, on its

¹ See his *Contra Mendacium* and Epp. clxix, 13, ccii, 8, ccxxxvii, 3ff.