

example, as the true structural pattern of the manifestation and communication of the revelation of God through and in his only Son—all this forms the basis of our communion with Christ in his body, the Church. Our human nature and the nature and pattern of God's revelation is the total basis of our spiritual lives, and yet none of this seems to enter into the immediate tradition of spirituality with which we find ourselves. Conditions very similar to the present possibilities are to be found in St Augustine. A genuine theology and philosophy, inseparably welded together, is to be found in St Anselm, in the great Cistercians, and no less in St John of the Cross. Unless it is there, and now surely is the time when it could and should be beginning to show itself, any spiritual writing will be ultimately empty—however nice and true and even necessary its sentiments are—neither really to do with God nor with man.

The Rahner book is of a very different nature. It is not a book about prayer, but a book of prayer. It consists of a series of meditations or addresses to God, in a style which in English at any rate is unfortunately impossible (however successful the original German may be)—'How can I seek you, O distant God, how can I give myself to you . . .' 'O my Soul, never forget the dead . . .' 'O God of my Vocation, let my life be consumed as the Sacred Host . . .' Behind all this is the theology (with philosophy not lacking) for which Rahner has become famous. But I fear that those who are not already to some extent acquainted with his thought will not easily see it here. There is, however, something further lacking in this work. One is immediately tempted, by its form, to compare it with similar passages in Augustine, Anselm and William of St-Thierry. There is that definitely missing which the form, I think, demands. It is too artificial, too calculated. Such prayer essentially needs to be achieved in and through its expression, if it is to convey the living message which must surely be its aim. Rahner's book reads, at least, as if the theory had been worked out beforehand and then later written down. It is certainly something in the right direction, because it contains the elements which we have been demanding above, but, in its English edition at any rate, it fails to reveal the necessary spontaneity. It is a pity that this should be one of his first few books to appear in English, for it cannot help but give a bad impression—or rather, an empty one. At the moment of writing we are eagerly awaiting the imminent appearance of the English translation of *Schriften zur Theologie*.

GILES HIBBERT O.P.

THE CHURCH IN THE DARK AGES, by Jean-Remy Palanque. THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES, by Bernard Guillemain. THE LATE MIDDLE AGES, by Bernard Guillemain. Burns and Oates, Faith and Fact Books, 8s. 6d. each.

These three books cram an astonishing number of facts into a very short space. But they manage to keep purity of style and clarity of thought. Each one is a masterpiece of precision and concision; the French have a gift for combining encyclopaedic knowledge with good taste, and the translation is well done,

except for some rather cumbrous sentences in the first volume. The other virtue of this series is its way of presenting the history of the church 'from the inside', thus avoiding those confusions which arise from judging the church solely as a performer in secular affairs, or solely from the behaviour of her leaders. The authors look at what the church has been and done in the light of what she truly is and sets out to be; and they keep in constant touch with those strata of church history whose full story has still to be written—popular piety and the way the ordinary Christian has viewed life—thus following a recent trend in the history of secular ideas which concentrates on the attitudes of ordinary people. Guillemain's turn of thought and turn of phrase is often original.

Guillemain deals particularly well with the fusion of the church and culture in the early middle ages, their divorce in the later, and the pros and cons incurred by the Church from her identification with Western Europe. Indeed by the nature of the subject his books become, as their title implies, histories not only of the church but of the whole age. He illustrates the (to modern eyes) amazing unity which the great men of the eleventh and twelfth centuries achieved between religion and life as a whole. He does well to antedate the 'schizophrenia' which set in in the late middle ages to the thirteenth century, when the 'new men' of the time were already becoming imbued with a purely human ideology. His picture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is excellent, when he sketches the exuberance and excess which dominated every aspect of life from those ornate, dull altar-pieces which lord it over continental museums to the papalists and imperialists, who introduced a new schism between theory and practice; dangerous because soon people would be justified in saying that this schism was so deep that theory no longer mattered. But whether the fifteenth century was so intellectually 'disappointing' as he says, remains to be seen; a whole host of by no means unpromising authors of that time have not yet received the study they deserve. He mentions Nicholas of Cusa whose thought has sprung to light recently, and who was a key figure in attempting to reunite faith and knowledge in a single philosophy. But he lacked followers, and the story of the middle ages ends with a mass of uncertainties, about the church, about grace, about the rights of the state and the bases of science—and about the future.

ANTHONY BLACK

Notices

THE HIDDEN SPRINGS, by Renée Haynes (Hollis and Carter, 30s.) is a comprehensive discussion about every kind of 'psychic phenomenon', which brings them into relation with group behaviour in animals and with theories of