

NAISSANCE DU CHRÉTIEN. Par Pierre Herbin. (Editions du Cerf.)

This is a lively book, and one that many would not perhaps at first recognize as 'liturgical' if they were expecting only pious meditations or a history of ceremonial. There is here pious meditation enough on the meaning of four sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist and Penance. But it is all linked up in a most intelligent way with ancillary rituals such as the blessing of a pregnant mother or the consecration of a baby to our Lady, and with innumerable practical matters such as how to dress for first Holy Communion, what offering to make the priest after Baptism, invitations to the christening party, photographs after first communion. This is all excellent and far from trivial because it makes a unity of the Christian life. One brief passage replies to 'Pourquoi M. le Curé ne fait-il pas comme dans la paroisse d'à côté?'. And apparently certain French dioceses encourage the custom of giving to the priest after Baptism an offering 'qui ne saurait consister uniquement dans le cadeau . . . d'une boîte de dragées'.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

LE MYSTÈRE DE LA DIVINE CHARITÉ. Par Dom Georges Léfèbvre. (Editions du Cerf.)

This is a new volume in the collection 'L'Eau Vive' which already includes works by the late Abbot Vonier and Caryll Houselander translated into French. Dom Georges Léfèbvre has previously written *La grace de la prière* and this volume might well be read as a sequel which seeks to penetrate nearer to the heart of the Christian life. The central truth of Christianity is that God is love and that he invites us to enter into the mystery of his love; this book examines how we may do that by prayer. Prayer is both a free gift of God's love and the result of our efforts and sacrifices; and so it is attended by both pain and happiness. It is a great mistake to imagine that those who reach a high state of prayer—the way of union, or illumination—have no further need of mortification. Perhaps the best thing about this book is that it makes that point clear and emphasizes the mystery of the cross which lies at the heart of the highest state of prayer.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

LA MESSE. By Romano Guardini. (Editions du Cerf.)

This volume, translated from the German by Pie Duployé, follows immediately in the series *Lex Orandi* on Father Boyer's *La Vie de la Liturgie*; it is less massive but no less learned or perceptive. Nor is it less welcome, since the subject matter is what we have heard before from Dr Guardini. The chapters of this book were compiled from instructions given to the faithful before Mass with a view to helping

them to take an active part and to wean them away from the habit of 'looking on'. The matter is as topical as it was over ten years ago when it was first produced in German. One could select numerous points for discussion; a few headings will suffice: silence as an activity—active listening—the altar table. This sort of instruction brings the Mass to life, everyday life. The three chapters on liturgical—and for that matter general prayer—difficulties deserve note. They afflict us all from time to time, and we can often help one another with them without being high-grade theologians; they are staleness, the desire for emotional satisfaction and the oppressive sense of our own sins. Dr Guardini's study of all these matters is most practical and helpful, and many of the chapters can be read in isolation for their own sakes, as can the methodical study, historical and theological, of the nature of the Mass, which occupies almost all the latter half of the book.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PATRISTIC AGE CONCERNING MARY'S DEATH.

By Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. (Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland; 95 cents.)

This reprint from *Marian Studies* (Vol. VIII) is a collation of the evidence for and against the belief that our Lady died. It covers the first eight centuries. It is thorough, as was to be expected of the author, and comes down definitely on the positive side, i.e. that she did actually die. But only as a strongly felt opinion. It does not dispose of the question and those theologians (few, but not negligible) who for other reasons like to think that our Lady passed from earth to heaven without death will be grateful to Father Burghardt for having set out so clearly the weakness as well as the strength of the Patristic evidence.

His conclusion is that 'there emerges a widespread conviction of the early Church that our Lady died a natural death. . . . However, the nature of much of the evidence . . . is too fragile to sustain an apodictic conclusion on the theological significance of this conviction. But the conviction is there. More than that, the consistency of its liturgical expression and the uniformity of its homiletic articulation warrant the conclusion that it was conscious, abiding, and informed.' But whether, in nearly all the evidence provided, it is a conviction or an assumption is just the point at issue. Only when we have answered that can we consider whether it was conscious or informed.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

LE TRÔNE DE LA SAGESSE. By Louis Bouyer. (Editions du Cerf.)

Masterly is an accurate word for this book. It is a richly reflective long essay (296 pages) on the implications of all the data of revelation which can help us to understand the doctrine of the motherhood of