

## REVIEWS

worship Him filially. Through the sacramental characters we share in Christ's priesthood and in His priestly worship. Being configured to Christ implies a repetition in ourselves of His death and resurrection, death to sin, life to God, here and now. That is the Christian spiritual life. We can achieve it through active participation in the Mass, making it our daily interior sacrifice in union with Christ's—the Mass which St. Vincent Ferrer calls 'the highest work of contemplation.' This is an outline of a work which should do much to remove false impressions about the liturgy, above all the impression that being public and 'official' it cannot be personal and is therefore inferior to 'mental' prayer. It demands, of course, the most intense 'mental' prayer and in the Mass an even more perfect interior self-oblation.

A.M.

**THE QUESTION AND THE ANSWER.** By Hilaire Belloc. (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co.; Science and Culture Series; pp. vii, 94; \$1.25.)

Mr. Belloc enters an unfamiliar inn when he sits down to convert America, and as suits a stranger in the bar, argues quietly and listens with politeness to his opponents. The converted may sigh for the 'lusty blows' and the 'emphatic Belloc' of the ludicrous 'blurb'; but this prose, exact and controlled even for Mr. Belloc, is justly chosen for his purpose.

The question—What is Man?—is answered with the question, *Utrum Deus sit*, and the opponent disarmed at once with a Thomist 'Does God exist? Apparently not.' The classical proofs are rather hidden in a charming refutation of those philosophasters who have denied causality, or the validity of thought, or attributed consciousness to matter (where the old Belloc raps on the desk for attention with 'the great Lucretius . . . and the absurd Haeckel, of our own time.') But there is a army of Doubters, more numerous and more reputable, sceptical of the sensible world itself: it is unfortunate that this Epistle to the Sceptics dismisses them with a glorious, 'These things we know. To say we do not know them is nonsense.' This is no better than Johnson's 'Thus I refute it,' and we like

## BLACKFRIARS

our Belloc more acute if no less defiant than the Doctor. Indeed the point might be (temporarily) conceded. If my sense-data are delusions, they are yet part of reality, and must be explained: they are contingent, yet not controlled by my mind: therefore not its creation, but the creatures of some other, necessary, Being.

After God, Revelation. First, the need for it. Secondly, if a revelation, then a witness of it: or it is but a vision to a few, and nothing to posterity. Mr. Belloc describes the marks he postulates of this witness, betraying his feeling rather in the choice of metaphor than in any disturbance of his calm and simple style: in the last lines the sceptic is invited to have the courage of his honesty and identify this witness with the Catholic Church.

'I count religion but a childish Toy, And hold there is no other Sin but Ignorance.' If it can be done in a hundred pages Mr. Belloc makes it impossible to hold these two beliefs at once.

L.C.G.

BELIEF IN MAN. By Philip S. Richards. (S.P.C.K; pp. 193. 7/6.)

The anti-humanist implications of the evolutionist theory are a danger not only to belief in God but belief in man also, for if human nature ceases to be regarded, in the Aristotelian phrase, as a Real Kind, if there are no absolute human standards and values, he is inevitably dethroned and becomes merely another moment in the Heraclitean flux. If, on the other hand, we are to retain our humanist values and traditions we can only do so by upholding those standards as absolute and ultimate. This book offers a very thoughtful and cogent argument in this sense. Its positive and constructive side is, though the author is not, it appears, a Thomist, a fine defence of a Thomist thesis, for it advocates that completion of man both naturally and supernaturally which is precisely the programme of Thomist humanism, and regards the uncoordinated state of the sciences as only remediable, finally by the 'reinstatement of Theology,' and, until that becomes more feasible, by the reinstatement at least of absolute human standards.