

the lecture is: 'the postulates on which *Principia Mathematica* is founded may perhaps invite further investigation from the metaphysical standpoint'. From that point of view it is not unlikely that Russell and Whitehead's work will eventually be seen to be an ontology rather than a logic, and so an unlooked-for verification of the traditional scholastic thesis that the foundations of the sciences can only be securely laid by metaphysics. Experience and reason alike show that 'as Descartes himself realised in later life, to attain his universal scientific philosophy without borrowing any data from empirical sources was inherently impossible'; it follows that either mathematics is irreducible to logic or that it cannot take the dominant place in philosophy which is here claimed for it. The half-dozen pages in which it is attempted 'to build up a rational framework into which we can fit our experience of the inanimate external world; and as its foundation a doctrine of space' contain some interesting suggestions but presuppose a vast amount of metaphysics which could not possibly be described as mathematical.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

EXISTENTIALISM. By Paul Foulquié. (Dennis Dobson; 7s. 6d.)

'Existentialism has brought into clear relief those ideas which are not, after all, although rather forgotten, anything but facts of common-sense.'

'But the assimilation of what is true in existentialism can only be done by a long process of reflection, of a kind that can only be disturbed by public debates and tub-thumping. Therefore it is desirable, for authentic existentialism, that the sudden fashion into which it has risen should pass.'

Perhaps the above quotation is the most valuable contribution to studies on existentialism that has been made for some time; equally praiseworthy is M. Foulquié's calling attention to the thought of Lavelle, the successor of Bergson and Leroy at the College de France. Otherwise the book contains nothing that is new, not even the statement that 'as a matter of fact St Thomas has not completely eliminated all traces of Augustinism' (sic!).

DONALD NICHOLL

MEDIEVAL MAN AND HIS NOTIONS. By Frederick Harrison. (John Murray; 7s. 6d.)

This little book provides a fascinating 'lucky-dip' for the general reader intelligently interested in the past; but its author is perhaps over-bold in claiming, as he does, that it will furnish him with 'a clear-cut picture' of medieval man, his way of life, ideas and beliefs. As a scholar of Canon Harrison's own cloth has written: 'The spirit of the Middle Ages is impatient of capture, insusceptible of analysis, though many have essayed the task'. This collection of illustrations, drawn at random from a wide range of sources spread over a period of some seven centuries, can hardly be

expected to evoke a spirit so elusive, although it affords a succession of vignettes of medieval life often as vivid and detailed as the miniatures of a contemporary illuminated manuscript.

In his prologue Canon Harrison disarms criticism by declaring that the book is not intended for the specialist; but he occasionally permits himself generalisations that challenge comment. The researcher familiar with the bewildering richness and variety of medieval institutional life will, for instance, read with some astonishment that the men of the Middle Ages were intellectually, socially, ecclesiastically, politically and economically 'bound in fetters'; and that they made 'little or no progress' during seven or eight centuries. Perhaps it may be suggested that Canon Harrison falls too readily into the current assumption that mental progress is to be measured solely in terms of scientific advance—or perhaps such branches of knowledge as theology and metaphysics are excluded by him from consideration as being neither 'familiar' nor 'easily understood'!

In the epilogue he pays tribute to the fundamentally Christian character of medieval society. 'At heart', he tells us, 'medieval man tells us that he possessed the pearl of great price': his mind was 'saturated with the Christian faith as the medieval Church taught it'. Here surely is the real clue to that identity of outlook between the men of the eighth and the man of the fifteenth century, which to Canon Harrison seems indicative of the stagnation of the Middle Ages. The habits of thought of the early Tudor Englishman were, he complains, the same as those of the Anglo-Saxon of the age of Alfred the Great. 'Their interpretation of the universe was the same; their superstitions were the same; their devotion to an ecclesiastical system were the same'. In other words, whatever else might differentiate them, they were bound together by the same Faith, and by incorporation in the same universal Church of Christ. And is not this the reason why it should be much easier for the modern Catholic to 'find his way into the heart of his medieval predecessor' than for the average 'man of the twentieth century' for whom Canon Harrison writes? To borrow once more from the source quoted above: 'If the four chief attributes of man at his highest be Love, Reason, Faith and the sense of Wonder, [the men of the Middle Ages] at least had them all: which does not mean that they always used them well'.<sup>1</sup>

H. M. CHEW.

ROOF BOSSES IN MEDIEVAL CHURCHES. By C. J. P. Cave, M.A. F.S.A. (Cambridge University Press; 35s.)

It is difficult to select the more accurate superlatives which come tumbling with such profusion into the reader's mind when handling this book. In the history of English sculpture and English medieval life the author has made a brilliant discovery and the result is a

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Prof. Canon Claude Jenkins: *Some Aspects of Medieval Latin Literature*, in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*, pp. 157, 158.