

THE TWILIGHT OF CIVILISATION. By Jacques Maritain. (Sheed & Ward; 3s. 6d.).

*Le Crépuscule de la Civilisation*, of which this is an imperfect translation, came out in 1941 in the *Editions de L'Arbre*, and had been originally the text of a lecture given in Paris early in 1939. It dates a little, inevitably, but the essence of it is still relevant. More space is given to the menace of Nazism than this deserves in 1945 and less to the Communist peril, but there is a hard core of teaching here pregnant with principles that are never out of date. This must be kept in mind by readers of M. Maritain; otherwise his anti-Fascism will appear more factional than it really is.

The tone is fierce and the movement tense and lively. Yet control is not lost, a profound intellect is always at work drawing to the light, or the half-light, something of the essential nature of the forces working in the modern world and tormenting it. We get glimpses of light, if only for a moment. Whatever people say, there is no real discontinuity between M. Maritain's long metaphysical training and his more recent political writings. It is the same mind; it is even the same method, with its rapidity, its unconcern about neatness, its sudden swooping grasp of the essential.

"The World" is the enemy, i.e. "man alone and by himself alone", organised for self-sufficiency on this planet. So "understood and lived" politics "tends towards the Pagan Empire, as the Apocalypse describes it." Here is the properly social effect of atheism—the kingdom of the devil under his various masks. M. Maritain cannot forget Satan. All that he says on "this terrible reality" is of value, though it is not all said very clearly. But this is only a sketch for a portrait which perhaps he has drawn out more in detail elsewhere. I am thinking particularly of pp. 27-30 where, profiting by Carl Schmitt's analysis, he attempts to define "the essence of pagan politics"—something deeper than the difference between Nazism and Marxism. Poor Schmitt has gone the way of the Third Reich; not so the politics of Atheism. K.F.

POEMES & PAROLES DURANT LA GUERRE DE TRENTE ANS. Paul Claudel. (N.R.F. Gallimard; 135 francs).

This is a useful collection of Claudel's war poems with a few prose works, written during the two wars and the intervening period. More than half the book is already well known to his readers but they will be grateful to have his war works in a single volume.

There is nothing of outstanding literary value in the poems written during the present war; none of them have the lyrical richness of some of his earlier works. Yet his mind is as keen as ever and his imagery no less bold and precise. But what is outstanding in some of these latter poems, written during the darker hours of France's humiliation, is a general atmosphere of light-heartedness and even of gentle humour which is never found in the last war poems. This is the privilege of freedom over brute force; its sign