

Blackfriars

THE CHURCH OF THE EARLY CENTURIES. By Professor Amann.
(Sands; 3/6).

This book, we presume, is intended for students. And yet it contains no references, no maps, hardly any dates. It may be granted, of course, that references, etc., can be overdone. But a student would develop a very slipshod mind if he became uncritical enough not to demand checks. And besides, some acquaintance with the original literature of a period is essential if he is to gain a sense of its reality. This is particularly true of the early Christian period where the sources are not too numerous, easy of access, and of great intrinsic interest. Perhaps a student would obtain a more thorough historical sense by first mastering the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles with the help of an exegetical commentary such as that of Père Jaquier than by beginning with so condensed an account as this.

Needless to say, that account is in itself very good. It is critical, lucid, and brings out the great issues duly.

A.M.

WHERE IS THY GOD? By Father James, O.S.F.C. (Sands and Co.; pp. 265; 5/-.)

This is good preaching; a popular supplement to the author's dissertation, *The Desire of God in the Philosophy of St. Thomas*. Based on sound theological doctrine, the thought is carried on an easy flow of words. Here lies the chief criticism. Although written up for publication, there are phrases which may have sounded well from the pulpit, but do not look happy in print. The ear may be impressed by a rolling period, but the eye, nearer to intelligence, is more critical. 'The puny mind of Man' sort of thing is easily overworked in argument, and anyhow, is better said than read. Without qualification, the preacher suggests that Our Lady made a vow of virginity before she was affianced to Joseph, and so loved modesty that she hid herself at an early age in the temple. It is quite possible that Catholic piety provides authority for historical facts on which scripture and early tradition are silent, but St. Thomas's cautious attitude on this particular point (3a: XXVIII: 4) is preferable. These fifteen discourses must have formed an original and instructive retreat, and, as printed, make a book of spiritual reading above the average. The sometimes neglected truth that Communion is primarily a part of Mass and not a private act of devotion is well brought out; also the nature of prayer as something easier and better than the unrolling of a film of pious scenery before the mind.

T.G.