

Catholic apologist has no need to change his weapons, though he has to direct them against assailants who always seem to imagine that they have said the last word. He also shows how fatally easy it is to let those same weapons get rusty, how easy to fancy that the defence which proved effective fifty years ago will be equally forceful now. We need no change in our principles, but if we are to use them effectively we have to be abreast of the times and possess an intimate knowledge of the trend of modern thought.

H.P.

THE ART OF MENTAL PRAYER. By Rev. Bede Frost. With an Introduction by the Rt. Rev. Abbot of Pershore. (Philip Allan; 8/6.)

Almost complete unfamiliarity with High Anglican books of devotion must, presumably, have lain at the root of the pleasant surprise which this book brought me. It is very good; and this not merely on account of the author's wise plan of allowing so many of the very best and authoritative Catholic writers to speak for themselves, but also on account of his own contribution. His chapters on *What is the Christian Life?* and *The 'Gap' in the Religious Situation of To-day*, are excellent; the latter especially so: and when, in *Part III, Explanations*, he speaks of *Some Chief Difficulties of Mental Prayer*, his handling of *Temptations* is all one could wish for. The central portion of the book is taken up with a very succinct review of the Ignatian, Franciscan, Carmelite, Salesian, Liguorian and Oratorian methods of prayer: but are the Dominicans, then, so colourless that he can afford to neglect them?

My criticism of the book would equally hold for many on the same subject written by Catholics. Why stress the difficulty of Mental Prayer? Is it difficult to learn to ride a horse? Not a bit—as I can testify from experience. Once sufficiently mastered, an increase of proficiency can go on indefinitely. Why do so few people know how to ride? Because they don't want to learn. It is just the same with prayer. Get people to *want to pray*, and, as Père Grou says somewhere, the rest will follow. Then the eternal division into *schools* and *methods*. For myself I think it overdone. Just as no two persons walk exactly alike—witness the unending drilling of the Guards—so no two persons pray alike, however identical the *method* they follow. Yet, broadly speaking, the exercise of walking is, in most people, the same: and so will true prayer be. There is far more similarity than divergence in all the various *schools* and *methods*, and meticulous dissection tends only to confuse.

Blackfriars

Both publisher and printer have done their work admirably, and the book is a joy to read; but why should the author who is content with *Ignatius*, insist on *Pedro de Alcantara*, *François* and *Bonaventura*, when English would serve just as well? Finally, the book, besides being well indexed, is enriched with an admirable *Bibliography*. Needless to say, the works mentioned are nearly all by Catholic writers, and a vast number by saints of the Catholic Church. One can only hope that so great a *cloud of witnesses* will lead the author to something even more fundamentally necessary than *The Art of Mental Prayer*.

O.F.M.

FLORILEGIUM PATRISTICUM, FASCIC. XXVII. S. AURELII AUGUSTINI, DE BEATA VITA. Ed. Michael Schmaus, Professor Extraordinarius in Universitate Pragensi. (Bonn, 1931; P. Hanstein; pp. 23, 1 Mark.)

The editors, Drs. Geyer and Zellinger, continue their admirable work. To review it is not easy; merely to mention it would be unworthy. For once, then, we will give some account of the treatise here presented to us. The *De Beata Vita* is a species of dialogue—or rather discussion, since the speakers were many—on the essence of real happiness. St. Augustine opens with a beautiful *Preface* to Theodore, whom he speaks of as most eloquent, endowed with this world's gifts and with a most acute mind, 5, *cf. De Ordine* i. 31. The question, he says, is how, having come into this world, we are to discover the best way to return whence we came. Some, he says, care nothing for this question; others rashly put out into the deep and are lost in the storms of this world; others—more fortunate—come, at length, after being near to shipwreck, into port (2). The first two discussions take place in the baths owing to the inclement weather (6-22), the third is held in the garden (23). After a light refreshment—lest their minds should prove sluggish—they sit down to open the discussion. The company is made up of Navigius, Augustine's brother, Licentius, son of Augustine's patron, Romanianus, a mere boy but possessed of a tolerable mind (26), one who recited Virgil in the early morning to Augustine's annoyance, *De Ordine* i. 6, 8, 9, and of whom a quaint story is told, *ibid.* i. 22; he promised to change his life which was alas, in harmony with his name, but he gave Augustine much cause for anxiety later on, *Ep.* xxvii. 6. Trygetius may perhaps have been his brother; he seems to have been the slowest witted of all the company (29), yet it is he who breaks out at the close with the exclamation, 'Would that we could do this every day!'