

has surveyed and dealt with agricultural problems in many lands, he is here only to ask the least expert of us to turn from doctrinaire economics to the urgent biological challenges that confront everybody. It is universally agreed that our subsistence margin is running out. Forests, for instance, are necessary to conserve water and prevent soil erosion. Yet one Sunday edition of one New York paper destroys sixty to eighty acres of forest. Man the individual is compelled to be adaptable and collaborates, as a matter of course, with nature. Hence the resourcefulness and independence of small mountain proprietors. But man in the mass is an alien body and an imposition; so there is an imperative need—apart from atom bombs—of diffused and smaller industries. (One would like, in this connection, to add John Brangwyn's admirable *Reasons for France*, Lane, 1939, to Dr Pfeiffer's bibliography.) To those not invariably disinterested people who maintain that culture is of the towns, the author points out that the ideal town is the capital of the countryside. In any case, towns, as they are, have little creative spirit; and what *clan vital* they do evince is drained from immigrant rustic sources. The process should be reversed, and the townee educated to appreciate—and largely to revert to—his rural origin.

These are but a few examples culled from the apparent diversity—though the theme is actually a close-knit one—of Dr Pfeiffer's book. It aims at unrolling a significant panorama of the world's biological condition before the world's social conscience. Admirably illustrated, with photographs of primeval forest, man-made desert, and every stage of bad and good cultivation between these poles, it is a book for everybody. One has seen it objected in a Catholic review that the author attaches too much importance to pagan fertility cults: which have in fact preserved the earth and do, where they prevail, still preserve it. Is it perhaps because we have so obviously flouted the interdependence of the natural and the supernatural life that we dare not face, in this vital field, the superior achievements of pagans.

HELEN PARRY EDEN.

LIFE AND DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN WEST. By Albert Gleizes. Translated from the French by Aristide Messines. Foreword by H. J. Massingham. (Dennis Dobson; 7s. 6d.)

In these days of political, social and economic unrest, the economist, politician, philosopher and theologian give their diagnosis and suggest their remedies accordingly.

In the attractively produced and moderately priced volume of essays before us, Mr Gleizes gives his reasoned opinion of the cause (not causes) of the present ills of society and, in a brilliant concluding chapter, sketches the road to recovery. The cause of our present distress is a certain state of mind that has evolved over the centuries; the cure centres around 'the Individual Society, the Universe, the cell, the organ and the organism'. So far so good!

But, between the author's positing of his thesis and his final pro-

duct, what mental meanderings, what involved theorising. Before the end we have met M. Gleizes's philosopher, economist, historian, mathematician, moralist and theologian, but then why not? This is no book for the superficial; it is not to be read for recreation. It will provide for the metaphysician a variety of mental gymnastics; for the economist, much provocation; for the theologian —?

The first essay is an ambitious and loftily sustained dissertation on the distinction between 'Life viewed as a trading' and 'Trade viewed as the Purpose of life'. There is some heavy going here; yet time, patience and application will reward the reader, for there are many jewels awaiting discovery and many questions to be asked. But one reaches the end with a feeling of relief, for the style is ponderous, despite the pleasing variety of the footnotes.

The second essay is the reward of the industrious reader; here indeed one feels that the author is at his best. We rub shoulders with him, for his message will find a responsive echo in every heart. In 'Land and the Manual Trades', one finds Gleizes the craftsman (he is a painter) calling us back from industrialism. All advocates of the 'Back to the Land' movement will enjoy this. (One imagines Fr Hayes smiling broadly in his Tipperary parish and no doubt G. K. Chesterton and Eric Gill nod assent!) Others are challenged to think.

In the third essay—'The Mystery of Bread and Wine'—the author treads dangerous ground. His love of analogy betrays him; he deplores, perhaps rightly, the debased commercialism of modern life and gives the example of wheat and flour, and then concludes: 'But Mass is still said in churches; daily the priests enact the mystic scene; on Sundays pious crowds hasten to the services. Could the principle have vanished from Holy Communion since bread, its indispensable reality, is unquestionably absent?' (p. 78).

The author concludes likewise of the wine used at Mass (p. 82). Need we remark on this? There is something about angels and fools!

The concluding chapter is brief, clear, condensed and concise; wise in conception and execution, so that one is never at a loss to grasp the author's meaning, and few will question the sanity of his solution. The whole work is bold and original in its manner of treating a dry enough subject; it amply repays the labours of author, translator, publisher and reader.

M. COSTELLOE.

RECLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE. By Dr Willis Dwight Nutting. (Berliner and Lanigan; California.)

It has become a tradition in American films that every so often a particular character should drop the mask of unreality, take a nose-dive into the camera, and with an embarrassingly large face address the audience on 'The American Way of Life'; or perhaps Democracy in general with a special mention accorded to the United States. Those who have squirmed uneasily in their seats during these harangues would certainly take comfort from this book by Dr Willis