

and a godless anarchy. The signs are plain enough, and one can only pray that those who see the need to seek truth and to accept the demands it makes, will not be distracted by any prejudice, cultural, national or whatever it may be. In the meantime, one can gratefully acknowledge an ally.

I. E.

JEROME SAVONAROLA. By Mgr John O'Connor. (Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

Those who are apt to think Savonarola a firebrand will probably not feel inclined to alter their minds after reading this provocative sketch of his career. Nor does his sanctity stand out in any greater relief by the blackening of contemporary characters. The character of Alexander VI could have received a more just treatment. It is easy to say that the 'conclave was a farce' but the historical fact is that there was a canonical election, and there is no irresistible proof that Alexander bought the Papacy. The tale of mule-loads of silver (the writer says gold) has long since been discredited. There is also proof from the pontificate of Alexander that there were other motives at work besides money. It is also acknowledged by historians that his treatment of Savonarola was marked by extreme patience and forbearance. Again it is not historically certain that Savonarola demanded of Lorenzo the Magnificent on his death bed, as a condition of absolution, that he should restore the liberties of Florence.

On the hypothesis that the excommunication of Savonarola was valid, it is difficult to follow the argument which renders him immune from its effects, since even in the hour of death canonical penalties are set aside only in favour of the reception of the Sacraments. But in point of sober fact Savonarola's whole contention was that his excommunication was null and void, and therefore he was free to disregard it. The matter is admittedly obscure, but is deserving of a less cavalier treatment than it receives in these rough notes.

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THE RIDDLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

This book was first published in 1931, and the second edition in 1936. Sir Edwyn Hoskyns died the following year, and this new third edition of 1947 appears with a very few alterations and additions. The work has for many years held an important place among high churchmen, and is indeed a sort of present-day summary of the position arrived at by a certain section of the Cambridge Anglican tradition in New Testament scholarship. Its object is (p. 10) 'to display the critical method at work upon the New Testament documents', which are the evidence provided by the early Church for the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. The riddle is 'the relation between Jesus of Nazareth and the primitive Christian Church' (p. 12). The book sets out to prove that there can be no 'unbridgeable gulf