

Yet Dr Lampert seems to score; for freedom is more *obviously* upheld by his theology than by ours. How easy it is to deride our effort to be persistently rational even in theology! To represent our metaphysics as an impertinent human word-spinning which, claiming 'to meet all the difficulties', is so blinded by 'abstractions' as to lose sight of the very factors of the problem it attempts to solve! Thomists produce bogus 'explanations'; Dr Lampert bows reverently before mysteries. This contrast is implied all through his book. Always it is Dr Lampert who acknowledges mystery, who respects the inexplicable, who is un-complacent, innocent, intuitive, so unlike the 'parsons and people who use phrases without wisdom'. He claims a good deal of credit by contrast. What is less tolerable perhaps is his habit of giving bad names to positions before disproving or even discussing them. His intellectual manners are in fact deplorable, and his gibes at reason and the abstractive process—that much-maligned necessity—become rather tedious.

And after all one may ask whether Dr Lampert respects the mysteries as well as the rational theology he discredits. If, for instance, the mysteriousness of the Incarnation consists in this that in considering it we have to conjoin factors which the mind sees as naturally separate, then the mysteriousness itself connotes a seeing; and the more clearly the mind sees what it naturally can see, the more aware it must become of the mystery. We are aware of a tension between apparent incompatibles, whether the divine and human natures or divine causation and human freedom. Our sense of a 'mystery' in each case is not lessened by the work of the abstractive reason; it is rather increased, or should be. Our difficulties are not, perhaps, ultimately lessened; but at least we do not surrender the absolute transcendence of God. Indeed, as Dr Lampert is glad to point out, abstractive reason upholds that absoluteness which he dismisses as 'impersonal' and, therefore, illusory. He takes an easier way; but one not necessarily truer or even more religious.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

HISTORY

SONG OF A FALLING WORLD. By Jack Lindsay. (Andrew Dakers; 18s.)

In the decline of the Roman Empire, 'the one example we have in the full light of history of the collapse of a civilisation', the author sees a unique opportunity to study what happened to culture and to work out the subtle relation between the social sphere (politico-economic) and the cultural. He sets himself to discover whether it is not possible to do in the case of literature what in recent years others have done in the case of law and of art, and show that it should be judged in relation to the future and not the past. Judged by the standard of the preceding classical age it clearly shows decline, but judged by the standard of the succeeding age it is the first stage of the medieval. While the *Imperium Romanum* was breaking up, poetry was adventuring into new areas of life and experience.

After a review of the developments out of which the Roman Empire came, the author studies the developments as vitality died out of its social and political life, changes often of a paradoxical kind and notably so in the case of Christianity which 'spoke from the heart of mass needs though its victory depended on profound changes in the State'. He traces the struggle between the two great ideas of the epoch, the eternity of Rome and the coming end of the world, the ultimate synthesis of the Christian and pagan attitude, and the end of the reign of rhetoric in the sphere of culture. He finds in the relations of Ausonius and Paulinus during the second half of the fourth century a 'powerful cleavage between new and old', and in Prudentius the resolution of the struggle and a representation of the 'new integration when the classical heritage was being transformed from within'. He gives a special chapter to poets who in the next half-century are of the old tradition, among them the Bishop Sidonius 'who has no specific Christian culture'. In succeeding chapters he traces his theme through the fifth-century poets of Gaul and the fifth-sixth-century poets of Africa where 'already in the early third century the imperial shell of culture first cracked and let new forces through', the sixth-century poets of Italy where the 'flare up of Boethius and Maximian ended the old culture of Italy', and lastly the sixth-century poets of Spain, Ireland and Gaul, ending with Fortunatus in whom 'there is a fruitful marriage of the main trends that have been traced. He hails a new symbol of unity, the Cross, and at the same time maintains his faith in the future of civilisation, of society. "Thus Rome returns to us", he writes to Duke Lupus'. In each chapter discussion of the writers selected as representative of the cultural movement is accompanied by verse renderings of illustrative passages from their writings.

As the author points out, the pattern traceable in either the social or the cultural is never one of simple decline with limping rallying points, but there is a recurring influx of new potentialities, of which some end in nothing, but others, even if the integration is brief, are of utmost importance to the future, implicating forms of a wholly new colour and direction. The critical study of the extensive and diverse literature of the age, together with what has been written on various aspects of its history and culture, and the judicious sifting of the great mass of material, must have been a laborious and exacting task. But despite the complexity of the subject the author has woven a pattern out of the tangled threads and works out his thesis and presents his argument with clarity of thought and expression, and without semblance of dogmatism. The result is a work that is a fresh and valuable contribution to knowledge and understanding of an era about which much has been written, and it has a special merit in its timeliness. The analogy between the age discussed and this is manifest, and those living in the early stages of the present grave crisis may well welcome this competent study of the course and

outcome of the initial struggle between Christian and pagan culture.
J. J. R. BRIDGE.

THE CHRONICLE OF JOCELYN OF BRAKELOND. Edited and translated by H. E. Butler. (Nelson; 15s.)

To some of us it has always seemed a pity that later Latin literature is not better known than it is; and that most people think of Latin only as the language of ancient Rome. True, much has been done in recent years to acquaint a wider public with the treasures of medieval Latin poetry; and Messrs Nelson are now to be congratulated on an enterprise which will make generally accessible a representative selection of post-classical Latin prose works of literary and historical importance. Among the first in this series of 'Medieval Classics' the famous Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond rightly finds a place.

It was Carlyle, in his 'Past and Present', who introduced this vivid record of the activities of a twelfth-century English abbot to the nineteenth-century public; and since that time, popular editions of the Chronicle have effectively rescued it from the oblivion which has overtaken other medieval works. There is, therefore, no need to describe its contents at any length. Jocelin, monk of St Edmundsbury, who held successively several important offices in what was one of the largest English abbeys, gives an account of the daily affairs of the Abbey under its great Abbot Samson, the circumstances attending whose election in 1182 he minutely relates. The Abbot of St Edmund's was a temporal ruler over a wide area of East Anglia, subject only to the King; and much of the Chronicle is devoted to the description of Samson's many financial anxieties, of his disputes about property, of his struggles to maintain his rights against his powerful neighbour, the Bishop of Ely. Disputes with his own convent (whose property was separate from the abbot's) also occurred. In all, the character of Abbot Samson, strong and firm, given to sudden wrath and yet as ready to melt into tears of repentance, a wise administrator who endeavoured to be a true father to his community and to his temporal subjects, shines clearly forth; yet (as in the matter of the abbatial fishponds at Babwell) the chronicler does not disguise his superior's faults.

This work has long been one of our most valuable sources of information about the internal life of a monastery of the period, as well as about its general and social history. Scholars as well as the reading public will welcome this finely-produced edition, in which Latin text and English translation face one another. The latter is an excellent piece of work, which conveys the flavour of the original without being archaic. Alternative renderings will inevitably suggest themselves to the reader; but it would be captious to pick out examples. Misprints are few: 'thou was' (p. 114) is the kind of thing modern compositors are always perpetrating; and either the