

as time goes on the stream runs purer. This latest outpouring is indeed encouraging in its greater purity, springing as it does more directly from the deep and mysterious well of reality.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

5. *What is the Mass?* By H. Chéry, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; paper 5s., cloth 7s. 6d.)

## REVIEWS

PLATO'S STATESMAN. A Translation of the *Politicus* of Plato with Introductory Essays and Footnotes; by J. B. Skemp. (Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science. Routledge and Kegan Paul; 28s.)

The *Statesman* is perhaps one of the least read, and certainly one of the most important, of the dialogues of Plato. For the understanding of his political thought it is as important as the *Republic* and the *Laws*. It contains the fullest description of the philosopher-king, of his authority unlimited by law, and the manner in which he should exercise it, to be found anywhere in the dialogues: and it also contains the clear-cut distinction between the nature of divine and human rule, and the admission, all the more significant because of the passionate conviction with which the ideal is expounded, that this perfect human ruler, the philosopher-king, does not occur in practice and that the best we can hope for is that bad second-best, the rule of law. Here the *Statesman* looks onward to the *Laws* where Plato in his old age, knowing that men in our world as it is can find neither divine shepherds nor perfectly wise and good human beings to rule them, sets to work to construct the best possible human city on the basis of absolute subservience of the rulers to the law, a law itself solidly based on true theology. There is much else of political interest in the *Statesman*. The account of how the ruler is to exercise his royal art and the descriptions of the imperfect constitutions include some of Plato's most sensible and realistic observations on politics. But Plato never treats or could treat politics in isolation from the rest of philosophy: so we find that the *Statesman* is not only a treatise on politics but an exercise in philosophical method, and furthermore that it raises theological questions of the first importance. The philosophical method in which it is an exercise is that of Division, one of the two great dialectical procedures (the other being Collection) which Plato came to hold were essential for leading the mind to the knowledge of the Ideas: and the extremely extensive examples of it given in the *Statesman* probably provide one of the reasons why the dialogue, like the *Sophist*, is not much read. They become of course

intolerably tedious and silly if one feels bound to assume that Plato is intending them to be taken absolutely seriously, and is never passing over to not unamused criticism of incautious or superficial practitioners of the method (which there is reason to suspect enthusiastic pupils in the Academy sometimes decidedly overdid) and the curious results they obtained. On this point Professor Skemp is extremely sensible, and some of his remarks deserve quotation. 'I think that the view of Reality which is implied in the use of the method is vital and serious for Plato; but this does not exclude criticism of the method on his part, and though Plato no doubt ought to be as solemn as some of his commentators, cheerfulness will keep breaking in.' (p. 68 n. 1.) Religion (and poetry) also will keep breaking in in Plato: and the myth of the *Statesman*, with its extraordinary picture of the reversal of the motion of the universe and the two alternating ages or periods, leads Professor Skemp to a long and excellent discussion of Plato's theology (a subject on which he has already written an excellent short book in the *Cambridge Classical Studies*).

A dialogue of this scale, importance and variety requires an ample and competent commentary, and the Professor of Greek in the University of Durham has provided generously for both specialist and non-specialist readers. His very readable translation is preceded by 117 pages of introductory matter, including essays on all the principal problems raised by the dialogue. There are very full notes, which will be indispensable to future specialist students of Plato, and an important Appendix on the dating of the *Timaeus*. There are of course inevitably particular points of interpretation on which one might disagree, or at least wish for further discussion, but in a short review it seems more important to state how very sensible, solidly based, and enlightening is Professor Skemp's interpretation both of this particular dialogue and of Plato's thought when he deals with it more broadly in the introductory essays. A feature of the book which readers of *BLACKFRIARS* will welcome is the number of illuminating parallels and contrasts between Plato and the Bible or Christian thought, especially of the English evangelical tradition, some of which should provide an excellent stimulus to serious thinking; the critics of that evangelical tradition, incidentally, are not entirely excluded, for Mr Weller, senior, makes what is probably his first appearance in a Platonic commentary in the note on Shepherds on page 59.

A. H. ARMSTRONG

HUGH OF SAINT VICTOR ON THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (*De Sacramentis*). English version by Roy J. Defarrari. (The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1951.)

The medieval method of translation was *de verbo ad verbum*. The translator did not aim at a readable or even intelligible version. The