

## BLACKFRIARS

antly took for a copy of the Bible? Again, Montanism, we are told, 'was evidently not a heresy, nor does it appear that it was a schism.' The re-Baptism controversy turned, so we are informed, on the question whether 'its efficacy depended on the element of water and the use of the Trinitarian formula, or was it only valid when the Grace was bestowed by the Church'; the amount of confusion of thought here is amazing.

H.P.

BROADCAST MINDS. By Fr. Ronald Knox. (Sheed and Ward; 3/6.)

The jacket of this new edition gives a cheering picture of a jolly rough and tumble in which an ecclesiastic (presumably the author) is dealing a series of knock-out blows to his antagonists whom he has taken on at the rate of four at a time. Playing up to the picture, we endeavoured to catch the spirit of the book by imagining that we were watching a boxing contest with the interest of one who, though he may not have an intimate knowledge of Queensbury Rules, appreciates clean cuts, hard hitting, and straight fighting. At the close of each round it was pretty evident that Fr. Knox's opponent was in dire need of the sponge and towel. His blows are mainly directed against those writers who sciect from little handbooks statements and points of view which tell in favour of the thesis they want to establish, concealing whatever may tell in a contrary direction and then serving up the whole as the best conclusions of modern research, disarming all opposition by appealing to the sacred name of science. Such folk Fr. Knox calls the omniscientists, and aptly describes their policy as an endeavour to convince the man in the street, not of knowledge, but of ignorance, and to make him so ashamed of his limited brain power that he is only too willing to delegate the business of thinking to heads wiser than his own. With this aim before them it is not surprising that they should show a marked preference for pre-history as opposed to history. No one can contradict the statements of a pre-historian except of course by saying one doesn't believe them or by resorting to the more effective method of hitting him over the head; but the statements remain even if the battered body of their author is lying insensible, and many people will not only sympathize with the victim but thank him for quickening the dry bones of palaeontologp by breathing into them the spirit of imagination. Once you have stated a few interesting characteristics of people about whom little or nothing is known, it is easy enough to draw conclusions and make them yield any moral you like. The omniscientists have tried it on, and Fr. Knox has surprised them at their little game. Their trump card

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is, however, the supposed antagonism between religion and science, and here we think Fr. Knos is at his best. With utmost good humour and ready wit he knocks the bottom out of heavy declarations calculated to make the Christian shiver in his shoes. We venture to quote one passage as an example. 'Soon or late,' suggests Mr. Menchen, 'the laws governing the production of life itself will be discovered in the laboratory, and man may set up as a creator on his own account. The thing indeed is not only conceivable; it is even highly probable. When it comes to pass the theologians will be staggered.' To which Fr. Knox replies that if a scientist proved the theory of abiogenesis, in which medieval theologians believed widely, there would be no staggering among theologians of to-day. Nothing, he adds, would stagger him about the theory except the extraordinary choice of language that would describe such a process as 'creation.' This is a book to read, and far too good to be merely enjoyed; hence we welcome this new edition.

F.D.

SKARA BRAE. A Pictish Village in Orkney. By Professor V. Gordon Childe Smith, B.Litt., etc. With Chapters by Professor T. H. Bryce and Professor D. M. S. Watson, F.R.S. (Kegan Paul Trench).

Conducted by Professor Childe and with the aid of sixty photographic plates and twenty-eight figures, we here explore the stony village of Skaia Brae which was discovered in 1850 after having been buried in sand for centuries. A kindly storm, hurling its winds against the Bay of Skail in South Orkney, blew the sand away from two of the huts and exposed to view the homes of a neolithic people, unfolding a page of Stone Age life that can be matched nowhere else. In 1928, under the auspices of H.M. Commissioner of Works, Professor Childe, together with other experts, examined and unsanded these and many other stone huts, discovering several layers of occupation all built by the same race of people out of the local stone—a variety of flag-stone. In the days of their habitation a visitor approaching the village from the S.E. would have seen a great heap of refuse with some stony roofs protruding like pimples to break the smooth curve of the rubbish heap, and from these excrescences wisps of smoke would be rising and fumes would issue from the passages, so that the whole hilllock would resemble the cone of a volcano. The village had at least ten huts and one main street or passage all under one roof, with an open space for the 'market.' Each hut had one room with cells leading off; the hearth, usually in the centre; a dresser with three tiers, some sort of table, 'limpet boxes' in the floor, and beds