

REVIEWS

possibility of selfless devotion to something other than ourselves." Or: "It was (the Bards') function to be 'psychologists'. . . . They had to suffer and endure and overcome all that belongs to the tragedy of the impurity of the human soul in the face of the Divine Soul. . . . Every poet knows this suffering. Theirs was a Dionysian, a Kabirian, cult." Passages such as these are vital. This is true light. But the light diffused here is not the same light that radiates in pretentious dazzle from the cabbalistic calculations in Chapter I or the zodiac-diagram from Paracelsus. This latter is too definite, too clear, to be true. Indeed such analyses are so "coherent" logically as to be ethically and religiously valueless. (For what is too "coherent"—too intelligible-for-us—is purely natural.)

In short, if the veritable *Walpurgis Night* of phantasies, to which the disciples of Rudolf Steiner treat us, were purged of its tinkling Magus-symbols, and if a quiet discussion of the personal character of the God who gives validity to those phantasies were substituted for much of the enthusiastic "light"-eulogizing, it would gain resonance and genuineness. And we should no longer fear the dissolution of our human individualities by the super-abundant radiance.

Yet these are but qualifications of our admiration for an inspiring book, delightfully written. And even these criticisms are perhaps anticipated by the author, when she says, in her closing section: "A jumble, you may say; a fantastic mixture of legend and superstition and pseudo-history. But perhaps, here and there, the innocent beauty of some old tale may have stirred your heart so that you had to say 'it is true.' The world magician has woven a beautiful tapestry and leaves the threads of it in our hands so that we may complete it; and in the centre a space is left for us in which to weave the Figure whose Face and Form elude us still, though we have held the threads to fashion them with for two thousand years."

All of which we concede—so long as we are not asked to dissolve our human individualities, *Homunculus*-like, in the face of infinite light. For grace does not destroy nature. If it did, no one would want it.

NORBERT DREWITT, O.P.

SOCIAL STUDIES

SOCIAL ORIGINS. By Eva Ross. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6.)

This little book is the outcome of a course of lectures given by the author at the Catholic Social Guild Summer School in 1935. They were of an apologetical nature and meant to disprove the false assumptions of the evolutionists which have for so long held the field regarding the origins of the family, the State, property

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and religion. The book therefore has its undoubted merits, but one wonders how far this purely negative approach will carry conviction amongst non-Catholics. Darwinism also once upon a time was proved wrong in this purely negative way: but it was only when the positive side could be developed by showing just how genetics conformed not to Darwinian but to Mendelian principles, that the bottom of Darwinism dropped out.

In the same way, it is one thing to refute the Comte, Levy-Bruhl, Tylor, etc. of a, scientifically, bygone age: it is quite another to explain very simply just how human social origins developed historically—from a Primitive Food Collectors' age to the three distinct types of primary civilization, of hunters, shepherds and farmers. What the ordinary reach-me-down man of to-day needs is a small manual of what I would call "Proto-history"—that part of human history which lies anterior to the beginnings—less than 10,000 years ago—of those Higher Civilizations of China, India, Babylonia, Egypt and Iran, whose direct heirs we are. And as the ordinary manuals of Astronomy do not prove why the theories of Ptolemy must be wrong, or that Aristotelian physics is false, or that the earth is not a disk, but just tell us what is known of the stellar universe: so also a manual of Protohistory is badly needed, just giving a straightforward account of what happened to man after his expulsion from Eden and how the four fundamental varieties of Primitive, Hunter, Shepherd and Farmer arose and later on mingled again.

Perhaps it is absurd for a reviewer to quarrel with an author for not having written the book he would have wished her to write: but it surely is like playing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark for an author—a Catholic author at that—to write on Social Origins and quote approvingly Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt, S.V.D., without as much as mentioning his four "Kultur Kreise" (i.e. the four fundamental civilization types), which he has done so much to establish, and acceptance of which he has rendered by this time scientifically inescapable. What Gregor Mendel has done for Genetics, Wilhelm Schmidt has done for Ethnology: it is the constructive, positive discoveries of these two Scientist-Religious that have brought about the final collapse of nineteenth-century evolutionism. One understands that agnostics do not feel much zest for a *haute vulgarisation* of theories which prove that Social Origins begin with Monotheism, Monogamy, etc.: but what grounds can Catholics have for fighting equally shy of them?

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS.

MODERN PRODUCTION AMONG BACKWARD PEOPLES. By D. E. Greaves. (Allen & Unwin; 10/6.)

This is a remarkable book and one that deserves close study on