

people should indulge if free institutions are to be maintained. The history itself is not beyond cavil. Aristotle is held to have assigned 'Pure Being' as the object of Metaphysics. It is an ambiguous phrase and leaves one guessing. St Thomas most certainly did not formulate the philosophical view 'that man and his natural environment were both necessary, if imperfect, manifestations of the same creative principle'. He used much ink in shewing that they were not necessary but contingent effects. The author strongly desires to keep the Logical Positivists at bay; these are not the weapons likely to bring success. Besides, semantics have certain just claims, which we feel to be violated when we find: five misprints in three short Greek words, the only ones in the book; 'to écraser l'inflame'; and 'the World had been made flesh'.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

ON THE *ILIAD*. By Rachel Bepaloff, Translated from the French by Mary McCarthy. Introduction by Hermann Broch. (New York: Pantheon Books, for The Bollingen Series: \$2.50.)

BLACKFRIARS recently reviewed the learned work in which Fr Hugo Rahner, S.J., had studied early and medieval Christian re-meditations of the 'Holy Homer'. Here we have a contemporary's deep re-meditation of the same perennial theme. There have been many more scholarly, more detailed and more bulky commentaries on the *Iliad* than this slim volume, which also successfully takes in the Bible and *War and Peace* as reciprocally illuminating terms of comparison. But there can be few that have displayed a profounder insight into the principal figures of the *Iliad*, and simultaneously its unique power as a commentary on the meaning of human life and its timeless significance for all times. Rachel Bepaloff and her excellent translator write with a rare economy and lucidity; almost effortlessly they carry the reader into a world in which:

'Both the Bible and the *Iliad* link ethical experience and metaphysical questioning very closely. The ambiguous universe of demonic forces is just receding from view; the world of rational symbols has not yet been constituted. Magic no longer possesses anything but ineffectual rites to impose on recalcitrant nature, and philosophy has still to invent its own incantations for bringing beautiful abstractions to life. At this possibly privileged moment, in the lyric preaching of the prophets of Israel and in the epic of Homer, a particular mode of thought is evolved which cannot be expressed and transmitted to successive generations in conceptual form, but which reappears and holds good every time man comes up against himself at the dark turn of his existence.'

The book may be read with profit even by those who have never read Homer; and perhaps it will be chiefly valued by many for the new light whereby it will—by presenting Homer as a point both of likeness and of contrast—enable them to re-read the Bible. Her

brief chapter on 'Poets and Prophets' vividly sets out how each, similarly yet profoundly differently, 'offer us what we most thirst for, the contact of truth in the midst of our struggles'.

We do not hesitate to say that for all its brevity and unpretentious simplicity, this little book only narrowly misses that exacting criterion which it quotes from Nietzsche: 'To be a classic, one must have *all* the gifts and *all* the needs'. It misses it because it perhaps tacitly and negatively assumes what Mr Broch in his introduction explicitly and positively affirms: the supposition that because 'the myth that man must enact is none other than the creation of his own mind, a creation that God, by a direct act of grace, had imbedded in his soul', it follows that man 'could renounce the outside hierarchy'. The author, for her part, does not indeed go so far as expressly to renounce this gift and need—itsself part and parcel of God's creation in and through his human image; indeed she implicitly gives it some due; but it still largely eludes her yet comprehensive yoke.

For the most part, however, Hermann Broch's introduction does little except dot the i's and cross the t's of the text: it has the rare merit of being an introduction. His statement of the nature and function of myth has hardly been bettered; but he fails to understand how integral Catholicity combines the fixity with the elasticity and dynamism of religious forms.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

WITH FATHER VINCENT AT MARBLE ARCH. By E. A. Siderman. (Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

The tribute of an honoured and honouring Jewish opponent and heckler for twenty-five years, this booklet is of great value, adding no little to our knowledge of a great servant of God, whose words are set down with Boswell-like faithfulness. We see and hear him in his habit as he lived, year in and year out, fighting the battles of the Cross in Babylon, his gay and noble courage matched by his immense charity. This true son of St Dominic was utterly free from human respect. This 'bonny fechter' was well served by his Irish wit which deftly turned the laugh against so many aggressors. In some of his views of men and measures his warm heart got the better of his cool scholastic head, notably regarding the Anglicans. I know definitely that what gave offence was *not* his sympathy towards them but his use of words which would naturally import recognition of Lambeth Councils as ecumenical and Anglican orders as possibly valid, and his seeming encouragement of dreams of 'corporate reunion'. A perfunctory footnote was no sufficient corrective. Cardinal Merry del Val felt very strongly on this point. Again he seemed blind to their strenuous zeal in preventing conversions.

Dying in 1943, he was able to keep unshaken his firm belief in the integrity of allied war aims. Poland had not yet been openly