

## BLACKFRIARS

The modern despot seeks to guarantee his legalism by a State-imposed moralism and rhythm—also exclusive of criticism. Mr. Munro's interesting detailed and authoritative history of the rise of Fascism lays proper emphasis upon the cultural work of the Dopolavoro and Balilla organizations, on Mussolini's appeal to Italy's great past and on the restoration of order. He indicates the fundamental difference of attitude towards religion of Pope and Duce, though he does not touch on the fundamental problem of criticism. This is a very good book.

Hitler would agree with Mussolini that 'the State is an absolute before which individuals and groups are relative.' Mr. Wickham Steed's book, apart from a dig at the Church, is a valuable commentary upon Hitler's creed. He outlines the Gobineau-Chamberlain doctrine of Aryan supremacy, of the Messianic mission of Germany, and also the pre-war racial hostility to the Jews. When Germany broke in 1918, the need for those who believed in her Divine commission was to explain her failure. The explanation was—'the Jews betrayed us!'—though Mr. Wickham Steed shows that they were only one per cent. of the German population and loyally served in the War. He goes on to point out that Nazi Germany, rid of the foreign body, and armed by the Totalitarian State with terror and untruth, will renew her Messianic mission. The Lord Shang fell to force. Must Germany learn the old lesson at the old price?

P. D. F.

PLOTIN ET LE PAGANISME RELIGIEUX. By E. Krakowski. (Denoël et Steele; 20 francs.)

Plotinus is of the first importance in the study of the Hellenistic environment of early Christianity, and of the relation between Greek thought and Christian theology and philosophy. English scholarship may well be proud of Dean Inge's lectures on Plotinus and of Mr. McKenna's translation of the *Enneads*. The present work profits from such predecessors and others, and is a popularization of their results. As such it has value for those needing initiation into the subject. The author's effort to correlate Bergson with Plotinus' system is distracting and not very successful. In his chapter on Neo-Platonism in the history of Philosophy there are several inaccuracies that should be noticed. On p. 260 *natural* should read *naturae*, and in the whole paragraph on Erigena the author shows no knowledge of the fact that he translated the pseudo-Dionysius and through him acquired Neo-Platonism and not through Proclus, whom he probably never read. Further, the author does not seem to know (p. 266) that the *De Causis* is just a copy of several chapters of the *Principia Theologica* of Proclus: a remarkable unawareness

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as this information has been available since 1268, when Proclus was translated from the Greek. He translates *Alanus insulensis* as *Alain des Iles* (p. 267); a reference to any textbook would have given him the right translation: *Alain de Lille*. On p. 267 *Madobe* should read *Macrobe*. The author is dealing with the work of Bernard of Chartres and he puts his Platonism down to the quotations from the *Timaeus* in Macrobius. But the *Timaeus* itself was already known in those days, and besides he fails even to mention the fact that Bernard copied pages and pages from Erigena. In a discussion of the philosophy of St. Bonaventure (pp. 269-271), the pseudo-Dionysius and Erigena are given as influences, but it is not indicated that the predominant influence was that of St. Augustine. Finally, p. 271, the author seems to think that not only the disciples of St. Augustine but Plotinus also was turned 'vers une contemplation interieure.' This is of course true of St. Augustine, whose system is altogether built on interiority, on the profound inward descent to the *mens*—*noverim me, noverim Te*. But it is just the other way round for men like Dionysius and Plotinus. Creation being a flow from the supreme good—*bonum diffusivum sui*—one attains perfection by returning to this good, by leaving oneself, *extatis*, and losing oneself in the hierarchy immediately above: pure exteriority. The confusion between these two processes is about as bad a mistake as one could make. It is regrettable that such blemishes should mar so well intentioned a book.

A.E.M.

**ST. FRANCIS OF SALES IN HIS LETTERS.** Edited by the Sisters of the Visitation, Harrow-on-the-Hill. With an Introduction by Abbot Butler and a foreword by his Eminence Cardinal Bourne. (Sands & Co.; 7/6.)

This book is the third of a trilogy. *The Spiritual Life*, a summary of St. Jane Chantal's instructions, *The Love of God*, an abridged translation of St. Francis de Sales treatise; and the present volume.

It is a representative selection bringing the spiritual riches of the unwieldy mass of over 2,000 extant letters to the un-leisured modern public in a book of 300 pages. The letters are grouped under headings covering all the essential elements of the Christian life, with short biographical notices, to give their background. Not only are the letters shortened, but the language itself is frequently 'somewhat curtailed and modernized to meet modern needs.' The translation reads very well.

As regards the doctrine this book should be of more than ordinary interest to the Catholic public. It comes to us with weighty commendation. In the Encyclical of January, 1923, our