

BLACKFRIARS

'leisure' hours outside them—all these are well done and live in the memory. The literary fault of the book lies in its construction; if it had been built up by more precisely marked-off incidents it would have gained in force. Its present continuity tends to be muddling. Further, the author must learn that our language is clogged with dead metaphors for natural beauty, and that advertisements have killed superlatives. If he prunes vigorously and achieves a universal detachment (autobiography is a dangerous experiment for a young writer, and only a faith in something bigger than himself will liberate him), there is no reason why the hope that has survived all his setbacks should not be fulfilled.

Mr. Whittaker, like every honest artist, hopes to make some money through his book, especially for his wife and child. He richly deserves to.

AELFRIC MANSON, O.P.

DOSTOIEVSKY. An Interpretation by Nicholas Berdyaev. Translated by Donald Attwater. (Sheed & Ward; 6/-.)

An able and useful attempt to achieve the impossible task of producing a manual of Dostoevskyism, a systematic account of Dostoevsky's conception of the world to which, the author acknowledges, he has added a considerable part of his own. The work, otherwise admirable, is vitiated throughout by its naive and far-fetched interpretation of the crucial *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. The author shirks the deep problem of the *Legend* by presenting it in terms of the struggle between Christianity and Bolshevism! He assumes, in common with previous interpreters, that the *Legend* represents an irreducible antithesis, thereby ignoring the final reconciliation of Jesus and the Inquisitor. He is consequently compelled (since he cannot ignore totally its obvious import) to conclude that 'in his religious conceptions Dostoevsky never attained a total unity.' Doubtless, as M. Berdyaev says, he misunderstood Catholicism. But we believe that there was no inconsistency between his philosophy of freedom and his attachment to institutional Orthodoxy, but that he was fundamentally in sympathy with Soloviev's 'free theocracy,' which M. Berdyaev dismisses as a self-contradiction. Is it not more in accord with his thought and conduct to see in his figure of the Prisoner and the Inquisitor, not two irreconcilably opposed forces, but two complementary elements in essential Christianity, opposed only when functioning independently, the spirit without the body and the body without the spirit? At least we cannot lightly attribute a glaring inconsistency to 'Russia's greatest metaphysician.' He was, perhaps, less *simpliste* than even the best of his countless interpreters.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.