

for example, has the theme of St John, that 'God so loved the world', on the cosmology of the *Timaeus* or the ethics of the *Gorgias*? Canon Fox has produced a stimulating introduction to Plato, but his book will not help to remove the common impression that Christianity was correctly interpreted by the Pelagians.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

PELAGIUS. By John Ferguson. (Heffer, 15s.)

This is a prize-essay from Cambridge and should be judged as such. The account of the historical background is at times inaccurate and frequently misleading. St Augustine's doctrine of grace is quite unintentionally travestied. But Pelagius is treated perceptively as well as sympathetically and the essay deserved the award if only for the admirable chapter on the theology of his commentaries on St Paul.
G.M.

STARS OF COMFORT. By Vincent McNabb, O.P. (Burns and Oates, 15s.)

The late Hilaire Belloc said he would go anywhere to hear Fr Vincent McNabb speak, and when listening to Fr McNabb's sermon at Cecil Chesterton's funeral he held it to be the finest piece of sacred oratory he had ever heard. At his best Father Vincent could touch the heights; but his sermons were not always oratory in the accepted sense and within the limits of the rules of the game. What was it that could attract Belloc, Chesterton and Baring and that simple character whom Fr Vincent used to call 'Biddy in the Basement'? It was some quality—hard to analyse, but unmistakable—in the man, a radiation of personality which made people say: 'poet' or 'saint'. True, he did not always touch a string in tune with every hearer's mood; but the sympathetic listener would always take away something—perhaps a stabbing phrase like: 'The world's prizes are for a select few: God's are for all', 'Chastity is the romance of wedded love; unchastity is only its tragedy', 'A drill-master makes an indifferent apostle'; or more often he would go away with the general impression of contact with a mind at once dynamic and holy.

The printed word is obviously not able to convey this magical effect, and although a book of sermons is not the same as the living word we are grateful to Fr Vincent's faithful amanuensis, Miss Dorothy Finlayson, who has taken down his words, as spoken, and given us this book. He rarely wrote his sermons and, but for her careful reporting, so much of his wisdom would have been lost.

She has gathered together thirty-six retreat-conferences and grouped them under six headings so that they form a progressive study of the spiritual life. They were given at the Cenacle and they are so arranged and edited that they would provide excellent matter for a full-length

retreat. Fr Vincent sums up the point and purpose of such retreats when he says (page 117): 'Members of the Catholic Evidence Guild who speak at street corners expect more fruit from spending three days in retreat at the Cenacle than from three years speaking in the open, because they would be getting into the proper frame of mind to deal with people's difficulties'.

In these pages we find Fr Vincent in a particular vein. To those who remember him they will be specially precious and bring back the familiar voice, the smile and the unforgettable presence. They bear the rare touch of Fr Vincent's originality and genius. B.D.

MEISTER ECKHART SPEAKS. Edited and introduced by Otto Karrer. Translated from the German by Elizabeth Strakosch. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s.)

Master Eckhart has become very fashionable, several books having lately been published in this country about the enigmatic German Dominican. The present small and unpretentious volume is designed to introduce the Master to a wider public. Its editor is one of the most important scholars to have saved Eckhart's reputation from the hands of his enemies who decried him as an heretic, as well as from those of misguided admirers such as the German romantics who hailed him as one of their fellow-panteists. In his introduction Karrer defends Eckhart's complete orthodoxy, which, however, is still somewhat doubtful, even if the greatest possible allowance be made for 'mystical licence'. In the present selection his more controversial speculations are left out and prominence is given to the practical side of his spirituality, which is very sound. In this he insists mainly on the necessity of complete detachment and perfect abandonment to God's will. It can therefore be said to be typical only of one aspect of his thought. Unfortunately the book is marred by a very indifferent translation which, in the Introduction, is often so literal as to be almost unintelligible, and in the extracts from Eckhart's works fails to convey the flavour of the medieval German. Incidentally, it is strange that a Dominican should be referred to as a 'monk' (p. 5) in a Blackfriars publication. H.C.G.

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNISM. [By R. N. Carew Hunt. (Bles; 18s.)

This is the fifth edition of a work which appeared first in 1950. It has been revised, somewhat enlarged generally, and brought up to date with a chapter on the post-Stalinist situation which discusses events up to the 20th Russian Party Congress of February 1956. As one of the clearest and most temperate examinations of Communism it can be warmly recommended. A.R.