

and a godless anarchy. The signs are plain enough, and one can only pray that those who see the need to seek truth and to accept the demands it makes, will not be distracted by any prejudice, cultural, national or whatever it may be. In the meantime, one can gratefully acknowledge an ally.

I. E.

JEROME SAVONAROLA. By Mgr John O'Connor. (Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

Those who are apt to think Savonarola a firebrand will probably not feel inclined to alter their minds after reading this provocative sketch of his career. Nor does his sanctity stand out in any greater relief by the blackening of contemporary characters. The character of Alexander VI could have received a more just treatment. It is easy to say that the 'conclave was a farce' but the historical fact is that there was a canonical election, and there is no irresistible proof that Alexander bought the Papacy. The tale of mule-loads of silver (the writer says gold) has long since been discredited. There is also proof from the pontificate of Alexander that there were other motives at work besides money. It is also acknowledged by historians that his treatment of Savonarola was marked by extreme patience and forbearance. Again it is not historically certain that Savonarola demanded of Lorenzo the Magnificent on his death bed, as a condition of absolution, that he should restore the liberties of Florence.

On the hypothesis that the excommunication of Savonarola was valid, it is difficult to follow the argument which renders him immune from its effects, since even in the hour of death canonical penalties are set aside only in favour of the reception of the Sacraments. But in point of sober fact Savonarola's whole contention was that his excommunication was null and void, and therefore he was free to disregard it. The matter is admittedly obscure, but is deserving of a less cavalier treatment than it receives in these rough notes.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

THE RIDDLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

This book was first published in 1931, and the second edition in 1936. Sir Edwyn Hoskyns died the following year, and this new third edition of 1947 appears with a very few alterations and additions. The work has for many years held an important place among high churchmen, and is indeed a sort of present-day summary of the position arrived at by a certain section of the Cambridge Anglican tradition in New Testament scholarship. Its object is (p. 10) 'to display the critical method at work upon the New Testament documents', which are the evidence provided by the early Church for the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. The riddle is 'the relation between Jesus of Nazareth and the primitive Christian Church' (p. 12). The book sets out to prove that there can be no 'unbridgeable gulf

between the faith of the primitive church and the historical Jesus' (p. 170), because 'a critical sifting of the evidence of the New Testament points towards the life and death of Jesus as the ground of primitive Christian faith, and points in no other direction' (ib.). Key-notes of the whole work are the perception of the unity of the New Testament as a whole, unity in the ultimate purpose of presenting the person of Jesus Christ, and an insistence on placing the New Testament against the background of the Old Testament—'the subtlety of this Old Testament penetration is not usually recognised' (p. 61).

The authors set themselves definite limits as historians. They stop short of theology: 'the historian can outline the figure. . . . Upon the ultimate truth and falsehood he is unable, as an historian, to decide' (p. 179). So the theological subjects of Christ's divinity and his revelation are only studied in so far as such claims are made on his behalf by the evangelists. Such an exclusively historical method seems of course to the Catholic reader (accustomed to the primary idea of Scripture as God's revelation) to be starting at the wrong end; but the intended audience must be borne in mind, *scil.* the Anglican in whose mind doubts have been raised by the piecemeal biblical criticism of 50 years ago, and who hesitates in accepting the historical data of the New Testament. The authors write (p. 179): 'The New Testament documents do in fact yield to the modern critical method; and yet the solution of the historical problem does nothing either to compel faith or to encourage belief. There are here no "assured results" of New Testament criticism. The historian can help to clarify the issue, but no more. He is unable to decide between faith and unbelief, or between faith and agnosticism'. The Catholic exegete has to go further: he must also be a theologian, and his standpoint will therefore be different.

When these self-imposed limitations of the book are understood, the work is admirable. It represents the mighty present-day advance on the old rationalistic criticism—'the practice of selecting this or that element and of judging its value in isolation which has damaged much otherwise excellent critical work in the recent past' (p. 180), and the main sections of the book are packed with accurate information, careful exegetical reasoning, apt biblical illustration and intelligent conclusion. Indeed the chapters (I) on New Testament Greek, (II) on the history of the text, (III-IV) on the relation with the Old Testament, and the sections of Appendix A on the early patristic evidence for the Gospels, are excellent, complete and concise expositions.

The chapters on the Synoptists (V-VII) are a lucid argument for the theory, almost universal outside the Church, of the priority of Mark. This is simply taken for granted: 'All modern New Testament study rests upon the remarkable achievement of the scholars of the last generation, who discovered the solution of the synoptic problem' (p. 76). The complete acceptance of the priority of Mark somewhat

vitiates the central chapters and notes in Appendix A on the dating of the Gospels. That it cannot be so easily accepted as the 'fundamental solution' (v.g. p. 83) is shown for instance in Abbot Christopher Butler's article in the April *Downside Review*, in which he upholds the traditional Catholic view of the priority of Matthew.

Somewhat unpalatable are remarks such as this on the Fourth Gospel (p. 148): 'How is it that no living scholar can confidently claim any part of it, as it stands, to be definitely historical?' The answer would be that John is regarded as a theologian and not as an historian. Under the title of theologian are included St Paul and the author of Hebrews (not St Paul). Yet 'neither their experience nor their theologising has created the history which they are handling, and, consequently, the witness which they bear to it must be taken seriously in any historical reconstruction' (p. 169).

Two chapters (VIII-IX) are devoted to an investigation of the characteristic 'Christologies' of the Synoptists and the theologians, and here again it is insisted that 'all the varied material concentrates upon and has its origin in one single isolated historical event . . . the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth' (p. 170). This teaching is indeed one more sign how far non-Catholic scholarship has moved from the old critical theories that reduced the origins of Christianity to a myth or refused to accept its historical basis through the rejection of the supernatural. Appendix B is a very good bibliography of English work on the New Testament.

The book contains much information not as yet easily accessible in English to the Catholic reader, and in spite of what appears to the Catholic mind to be a dangerous divorce of theology from exegesis, with consequent division of the supernatural from scholarship, represents a very important stage in the progress of biblical research in the Church of England today. SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PRINTING AND STATIONERY. By Hermes. (Fitzroy Publications; 2s. 6d.)

This booklet is indeed practical for the uninstructed layman or stationer who have to deal with the printing world. It gives brief rules of Layout, Blocks, Paper, Types, Proof-correcting, etc. If the basic principle 'the printer is essentially a man of ideas', or 'allow your printer to over-rule you if he sees fit', seems to render the booklet superfluous, it should be remembered that the printer will be greatly assisted by being able to discuss the job with a customer who knows the elements of his language. If the customer cannot describe his needs he may receive something he does not want. This booklet is a first step in a grammar of printing. C. P.

THE PROMISE OF THE YEARS. By Edward Grace. (Sylvan Press; 16s.)

This is an enthusiastic description of holidays spent in the Scottish Highlands, Arran, the Lake District, and the mountains of Donegal. The enthusiasm, which can include storms of sleet on a Scottish mountain, is infectious. There is a vivid story of a poaching lesson