

are Protestant missionaries of whom the same may be said. We must be plainly seen to put our trust in Providence. The final illumination of Islam waits until Christians show forth Christ more clearly.

NORMAN DANIEL

CHRISTLICHER STAND. By Adrienne von Speyer. Edited by Hans Urs von Balthasar. (Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln.)

Adrienne von Speyer, mainly known for her reflections and interpretations on the Gospel of St Matthew, St Paul and the formidable four-volume work on St John, has written a book for young people, born and brought up in the Catholic tradition, who are seeking guidance in their major decisions for life. The problems she is dealing with are manifold: how to find out and follow a vocation to the priesthood, decision for marriage or a single life, etc.; she deals with possible difficulties and complications, the way to overcome them, and is essentially concerned to give a lead for a life in the spiritual fullness of the Catholic faith.

E.W.

QUELLGRUND DIESER ZEIT. By Friedrich Heer. (Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln.)

This collection of essays and lectures is a vigorously expounded attempt at a Christian interpretation of history in terms of the author's highly personal brand of philosophical idealism. The book finishes with a kind of diagnostical survey of the European situation in the years 1945-1955 with special regard to man's position at the dawn of the atomic age. Although the author's meaning is occasionally obscured by the richness of his language the book makes nevertheless rewarding and stimulating reading.

E.W.

PLATO AND THE CHRISTIANS. By Adam Fox. (S.C.M. Press; 21s.)

Christian thinkers have always felt the fascination of Plato. Whatever the influence of Greek thought on Scripture itself, and in recent times the tendency has been to soften the sharp contrast sometimes made between Jew and Greek, the eclectic Platonism of the Graeco-Roman philosophical schools undoubtedly formed the background of many patristic writers and thus passed into the tradition. Yet to read this selection from Plato's religious thought, well selected and freshly translated by Canon Fox, is only to be reminded once again of the gulf that separates Jerusalem and Athens. It is not merely the contrast between scriptural certainty and the urbane hesitations of Plato; it is rather that in pagan thought nothing can correspond to the fact of grace. This is clearly brought out by the incongruity of some of the scriptural texts placed above each extract from Plato. What bearing,

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