

idealistic phase towards a new sensate culture as the book closes.

The late Dr Previt -Orton took upon himself the colossal task of abridging the big *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, at the bidding of the University Press. It is only fair to the Syndics to say that they intended it to be readable as a continuous history; only fair to Previt -Orton to say that they also wished it to be a work of reference. This latter task it fulfils in that there is scarcely a ruler or battle or treaty or change of government omitted between 300-1500, from the Estes to the Esthonians, from Tipperary to Trebizond and all contained in 1,120 pages. It is also readable, though one would quarrel with the author's use of the word 'amphibious'. But why did Previt -Orton choose a period of history for which he had no sympathy? 'Where', as a wise man once asked, 'where is man in all this?' With a dry schoolmasterly cough Previt -Orton sums up in the words 'progress had been perpetually thwarted and delayed not merely by external disasters but by the passions and wilful ambitions of men themselves'. And of what period is that not true? What appreciation is there of the adolescent barbarians, the harassed bishops, the confused kings who did try to be Christians? For after all, this is the great epoch of an organised Christian civilisation, and the student who uses this work of reference will seek in vain for the religion which the Church was trying to inculcate. Only on page 1116 will he find even its secular policy lightly sketched; the Papal organisation is deferred until we come to Avignon, and receives less treatment than the English Wardrobe. Previt -Orton does not know that Thomism is still alive, nor that Albert the Great as well as Joan of Arc has been canonised; and why, while he is detailing the harshness of the Inquisition, does he not explain what the supreme sacrament of the Manichees, the *consolamentum*, really was? He does not explain what the Gothic cathedrals (or any cathedrals) were for. He makes no attempt to estimate the size of population; there is no description of domestic life high or low, of diet; no attempt to show what the saints were aiming at or the sinners falling from. There is no attempt at all to feel his way under the dates and names and genealogical tables to the heart of the matter. Only in the superb illustrations chosen by Dr S. H. Steinberg do the Middle Ages come to life, and it is these that save the volumes from being a suitable introduction to the *Cambridge Modern History*.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

THE REALM OF SPIRIT AND THE REALM OF CAESAR. By Nicholas Berdyaev. (Gollancz; 15s.)

TOWARDS FIDELITY. By Hugh P'Anson Fausset. (Gollancz; 15s.)

This latest work of Berdyaev has been put together by a group of friends, and though it contains much of his most characteristic thought, yet it may be doubted whether it will add much to our knowledge of him. The style

is so staccato that it reads more like a collection of notes than a finished work, and though it covers all the familiar themes of his other books—*Truth and Existence*, *Freedom and Authority*, *Man and Society*, and contains a more elaborate criticism of Socialism and Marxism than he had attempted before—yet it does not create the impression of that deep and unified vision of the whole to which he aspired. The truth seems to be that Berdyaev, like many another prophet, had developed his idiosyncrasy so far that he had lost touch with the wisdom of tradition. His thought is no more Orthodox than it is Catholic, and though he is acutely alive to the problems of the day and has some penetrating insights into them, the thought is often confused and betrays an ignorance which a less brilliant mind would have avoided. It is significant that though his hope for the future is to be found in a 'new mysticism', which will unite the world on a deeper level of spirituality than in the past, yet he never gives the impression that he himself has found that level. His mind moves round the problems which continually occupy it with great rapidity but it never comes to rest in that mystery in which alone their conflicts can be resolved.

Mr Fausset is a writer who has been no less occupied than Berdyaev with the problems of our time. He has studied the 'split' in the modern mind (which began at the Renaissance) in the character of Donne; he has traced the tragic conflict which it produced in the minds of Cowper and Coleridge, and he has shown how it reached Titanic proportions in the life and work of Tolstoi. But in his latest work he has passed beyond the conflict and entered into a new phase in which the conflict begins to be resolved. His mind is no more orthodox than that of Berdyaev, but he has drawn on the wisdom of what Mr Aldous Huxley has called the Perennial Philosophy in such a way that he reaches a deeper level of understanding than Berdyaev ever attained. It is unfortunate that he finds it necessary to reject so much of Christian tradition, because there is no real conflict, we believe, between this philosophy as he understands it and Catholic tradition. Indeed there is no more urgent task at the present time than to show how this great tradition of Eastern wisdom can be reconciled with Catholic philosophy. There is no reason why the wisdom of China and India should not be as completely integrated with Catholicism as that of Greece and Rome. We hope, however, that Mr Fausset's critical view of the New Testament and of traditional Christianity will not prevent anyone from giving his book the close attention which it deserves. For it is the work of one who is deeply aware of the tragic issues of our time and has won through much trial and suffering to a sensitive understanding of the redemptive process of life of which we all stand in the greatest need. The chapters in the third part on love and death, on the relation between time and eternity, and above all on recollection and the discovery of the Self, are written with deep feeling and insight. Mr Fausset as a literary critic is alive to all that is best in the thought of the present day, especially in the existentialist

philosophy of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, and his own work like that of Berdyaev may be said to be in this tradition. But he writes from a depth of spiritual experience and with a grace of literary style which is rare among philosophers.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

DESCARTES AND THE MODERN MIND. By A. G. A. Balz. (Yale University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege; 63s.)

The advent of exact science and the intellectual ferment connected with it is assuredly the most important factor in the transformation which has shaped the 'modern mind'. Professor Balz has set himself to write a book about the first great thinker of the 'century of genius', precisely in the light of his formative influence on the 'modern mind'. This entity is characterised—following a good Cartesian precedent—by the difference 'between the results of claim-making in the positive sciences and the results of doctrinal inquiry'—namely, that the latter has not yet managed to produce 'sets of claims that are universally accepted by experts' (p. 441). What we need, apparently, are 'warrantable welfare-doctrines' (these are 'funds of doctrines virtually universally accepted by families of experts—in theologies, in philosophical disciplines . . .' etc., p. 444) and it is to the neo-Cartesian we are told to apply. The naïve ease with which Professor Balz skips from the seventeenth century to the twentieth and back again is encumbered only by a more than generous use of the abstract technical terminology and hyphenated expressions which he creates *ad hoc* whenever it suits his purpose.

It is not a surprise to find his Descartes hardly more deeply rooted in the seventeenth century than his neo-Cartesian in the twentieth. With a wealth of learning and intimate knowledge of Descartes' work, what emerges from the pictures of Descartes given us by Professor Balz is a tailor's dummy designed to wear modern dress. In explicating the 'central concern of Cartesian effort' Professor Balz states this as being concerned with a two-sided problem: 'On the one hand (the issue) concerns the relation of religious conviction to inquiry, where by "inquiry" must be understood what today would be indicated by such a phrase as "philosophy and the sciences". On the other hand, it has to do with the relation between theological doctrine and speculation and the pursuit of inquiry with functional independence of theology.' (p. 16.) It is indeed true that Descartes spares no effort, particularly in controversy, to defend his work against objections from theological quarters, usually by a careful delimitation of the fields in which theology and philosophy are respectively competent. We cannot question, as Professor Balz notes, his integrity in professing his orthodoxy in faith while asserting the authority of 'the natural light of reason' in its own sphere, and the use he makes of it. In this respect, at least, in reading Descartes we may well come to