

the student of culture. Or is it perhaps that a metaphysic more sensitive to the findings of scientific method might reveal a synthesis between the two approaches?

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

MELANCHTHON: ALIEN OR ALLY? By Franz Hildebrandt. (Cambridge University Press; 8s. 6d.)

Dr Hildebrandt modestly proposes to state rather than to solve the problem of the relationship between Melanchthon and Luther, mainly in the light of concessions made by the former to views on Reason, Law, and Power, which were incompatible with the strict Lutheran tradition. He claims that 'the theme is doctrinal and not historical', but his book is perhaps best understood as a contribution to the history of Protestant theology. Nevertheless recent events in Germany and the issues facing Protestantism today have affected the presentation, and the aim of the book is expressly stated to be practical: 'What matters to decide is whether or not the Church is justified and bound to make these concessions today'. The Catholic reviewer therefore may be content to note the incidental value of the theological exposition. Perhaps he will also be allowed to put in a plea that continental writers, unless they have the mastery of an Ernest Dimnet over English, should use their native language and arrange for a straightforward translation to be made; they will spare the reader a great deal of labour and perhaps a number of misunderstandings.

EDWARD QUINN.

ACTON: THE FORMATIVE YEARS. By David Mathew. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 10s. 6d.)

It is much to be hoped that Dr Mathew's new dignity will not prevent him from completing this interesting and characteristic study of the great Lord Acton. This volume covers the formation of the historian and treats of the years from his birth in 1834 to the time when he came under the influence of Mr Gladstone in the Sixties. The background to this life affords Dr Mathew an opportunity to exercise the talent which is so particularly his, the disengagement of different lines of cultural influence concentrating upon a person or situation. The background here is extraordinarily rich and includes Bourbon Naples, St Petersburg, Dollinger's Bavaria, France moving towards 1870, the old English Catholic families, the Granville Whigs, Wiseman and the Tractarians. Dr Mathew has brilliantly illuminated these facets of Lord Acton's life and one might instance his study of Josephism, or Febronianism, as a particularly valuable example of his technique. All this is admirably done. As one reads the volume, however, and sees the emergence of the grand lines of Lord Acton's thought, one sometimes wonders whether these cultural excursions are strictly relevant to the main theme of the book. That is why it is so much to be hoped that the study will be completed and the whole

life seen in balance. It was, indeed, as Dr Mathew says, a far cry from the Palazzo Acton at Naples to the *History of Liberty*. A massive intellectual apparatus, which Dr Mathew aptly compares to the reverberating reciprocal engines of the contemporary mechanical world, ground out from Lord Acton's immense knowledge truths of vast importance concerning the political, the social nature of man. Acton's reverence for the central doctrines of the Catholic Church and his admiration for the principles of the English Constitution as seen by Burke, led him to construct, or at least to indicate, a synthesis between these two systems where they affected the cause of human freedom. This cause he saw threatened by anti-social, anti-human institutions and, indeed, we are beginning to see that a properly human society must always be threatened by men who are trying to achieve a polity which is appropriate only to the superman or the animal. This is the importance of Lord Acton's thought, and of the immense authority of his erudition, for the difficulties of our own century and, we trust, Dr Mathew will still have leisure to pursue this vital theme through the years when the great historian emerges from the interwoven cultural influences which are so brilliantly portrayed in this first volume of his life.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

A ROVING RECLUSE. By Peter F. Anson. (Mercier Press; 10s. 6d.)

The latest instalment of Mr Anson's reminiscences is monastic rather than nautical in its emphasis, and its appeal will accordingly be less general. Yet it is dangerous to prophesy: monks are a magnet, and *A Roving Recluse* might be described as a long monastery-crawl; from the Anglican Benedictines of Caldey to Italian Capuchins, with many a gradation between.

Mr Anson writes with inside knowledge of the subtle difficulties that make the monastic life the easiest to admire and the hardest to achieve. For those afflicted with a Huysmans's nostalgia for the romance of the cloister, his candid account of his own experiences should be salutary. Yet his account of Caldey revisited makes one wonder: the shocks he underwent relate to colour and shape, and there is perhaps too small a recognition of the fact that the 'school of the Lord's service' can do without that fascinating décor which gave to an earlier Caldey its special charm.

Mr Anson's illustrations, as ever, give grace to his pages.

I. E.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE. By Stanley Cook. (Pelican: Penguin Books, 1s.)

This book deals with the Canons and Books of the Bible, a brief summary of its contents, a comparison with sacred writings of other religions, some fundamental problems of the Bible, and a note on chronology, with two chapters on understanding and teaching the Bible.