

His positive proposals are vague and inconclusive and involve platitudes about 'a unifying belief' (later he says: 'Beliefs—we have none') and 'a new purpose for a society devoted to peace'. As in so many other areas of modern society the Christian here serves more than himself. The 'problem' of the Cinema cannot be isolated from the 'problem' of a society without God, just as its artistic standards cannot be divorced from those of our culture as a whole. Studies such as those presented by Mr Mayer underline the first dilemma, and Mr Lindgren's book emphasises the second. There remains the need for a 'grammar of the Film' which shall relate the parts to the whole, and the whole is nothing new.

I. E.

ENGLISH BLAKE. By Bernard Blackstone. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

The book stands out with distinction among the welter of Blake exegesis with which we have recently been deluged. The portrait of Blake is well drawn, the intellectual background of his day is carefully defined. Since much of the poet's obscurity is due to the fact that he is protesting loudly in his own, and often deeply sarcastic way, at the contemporary outlook, the newcomer to Blake will be helped with many difficulties in allusion to

'The Monstrous Churches of Beulah, the Gods of Ulro dark'.

But hatred of the Deists, of Reynolds and of contemporary philosophy, art and science is only one side of Blake. He was equally concerned with theosophy, occultism and a sort of British Israelitism of his own invention. There are also the projections of his own sub-conscious world at which psychologists look so lovingly and long. Allusions to these are far more confusing and with them Dr Blackstone's book will not help. In his desire to make his subject clear to the lay reader he tends to oversimplify both the poems and their writer.

For Blake was not, as our author suggests, a clear-headed man who studies his adversaries' case and then sits down to refute it. He was a powerful thinker but he was essentially intuitive. The ideas with which he dealt were common controversial currency in the intellectual circles which he at one time frequented and which he would have heard discussed. After all, he had plenty to say about the Classics which he had never read. He was never a scholar and he had not a tidy mind. Hence we must disagree with many of Dr Blackstone's theories about him. Such as for instance that he deliberately wrote 'An Island in the Moon' 'to straighten out his ideas' (p. 27). Anything less like Blake's normal procedure it is hard to imagine, unless it is his alleged use of 'contemplation and silent prayer' in the 'training' of his wife Catherine! Neither can we believe that a learned quotation from the Principia was 'evidently in Blake's mind' (p. 236) when he recounted his vision of the nature of Time, in his Milton. This is entirely in the medieval

occult tradition. He drew his views direct from Boehme not from Berkeley.

Despite such criticism we do feel that the book by its very objective and matter-of-fact treatment of Blake and his visions will be helpful to the reader who neither wishes to sink into the depths of the Prophetic Books nor be enlightened as to the names and natures of the Living Creatures with which they deal. After all these represent only a small part of Blake's life work although to some the most interesting. Most commentators become so befogged in them as to lose sight of the whole man and the whole artist who wrote them. This Dr Blackstone never does even if his Blake emerges rather cleaner and tidier than in real life.

The analysis of Blake's religious views is excellent but we feel that we should have been spared many of Dr Blackstone's musings on them. Knowledge of Blake is not helped by such silly remarks as 'When we watch a child at play we are in the presence of a religious act, an act far more religious than any adult can produce with his religious forms and ceremonies or his vague aspirations' (p. 397). We could also dispense with several sneers at institutional religion in general and at Catholicism in particular.

Blake's anticlericalism, which is the cause of the remarks, is well known, but his own real religious experience gave him a deep respect for sincerity of belief in others. Witness his defence of Chaucer's Poor Parson. Of the Catholic Church, he said that it was the only one which really understood the forgiveness of sins. His visionary conception of the nature of the Mystical Body might have brought him very near the Church had he applied it practically.

The book is beautifully produced. The few illustrations give an idea of Blake's different moods. Plate V should be entitled 'Los arising from the Waters', not 'Urizen repelling the Waves'.

JANET CLEEVES.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Batsford*. H. L. Edlin: Woodland Crafts in Britain, 15s; Christina Hole: English Sports and Pastimes, 15s.
Blackfriars. George Kaftal: St Catherine in Tuscan Painting, 10s. 6d.
Bruce (U.S.A.). Thomas P. Neill: Makers of the Modern Mind, \$3.75; Francis Beauchesne Thornton: How to Improve Your Personality by Reading, \$2.50.
Jcnathan Cape. Frank Mumby: Publishing and Bookselling, 25s.
Casterman. Jacques Leclercq: Le Mariage Chrétien, 60 fr.
Cerf. Homeliaire Patristique, n.p.
Faber and Faber. Gai Eaton: The Richest Vein, 15s.
Lindsay Drummond. Alan Houghton Brodrick: Lascaux, A Commentary, 15s.
Herder. Michel Philippon: Die geistliche Lehre Schwester Elisabeths, n.p.
Macdonald. F. Sherwood Taylor: Concerning Science, 6s.
Mowbray. Difficulties, 4s.
National Council of Social Service. Work and Leisure, 3s. 6d.
Nelson. H. E. Butler (Ed.): The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, 15s.
Oliver and Boyd. Thomas F. Torrance: The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers, 12s. 6d.