

completion of the old Israel and to lead them on to the study of the whole. But all too many teachers know all too little of the Old or New Testaments to guide their pupils and indeed need a guide themselves. In the absence of a handy scriptural scholar, books must be made to serve but *The Modern Reader's*

*Guide to the Gospels* does not seem the answer. It is too often too simple and obvious, too often an easy paraphrase, too skimpy on St John. There are a number of interpretations with which Catholics will not agree but these are obvious.

PETER HASTINGS

THE PHILOSOPHERS OF GREECE, by R. S. Brumbaugh. London, *Allen & Unwin*. 1966. 35s.

This book is an opportunity missed. It is an introduction to the 'exciting intellectual odyssey' (sic) of Greek philosophy up to and including Aristotle, and it purports to give both the results of the best modern scholarship on what the ancients actually said, and the philosophical implications of what they said.

There is a place for such a book, but this one does not fill it. On the philosophical side, it is far too casual. Thus: Thales invented the ideas of matter, physics, science and philosophy (p. 11); the Pythagoreans invented pure mathematics, and the ideas of mathematical proof and form (p. 30); and so on. Little more is said. But a lot more has to be said. For example, it is not immediately obvious that people before Thales lacked the idea of matter. Did they not have adjectives like 'wooden', 'brazen', etc., and does this not show that they had the idea of matter in one sense? If in some other sense they lacked this idea, it has to be set out much more carefully what precisely this sense is.

But did Thales invent the idea of matter in any sense? This has been doubted, and this point brings me to the question of the standard of scholarship in this book, which does not seem to me to be such as to encourage confidence in the author's general contentions. Brumbaugh gives an authority for every view which he adopts. But this is little good. What we want is the reasons why he adopts this view, and rejects all the others.

Two sentences on p. 30 will serve as an example of this looseness in the scholarship and in the reasoning:

Answering Thales's original question, Pythagoras and his followers held that all things are numbers. His study of the mathematical ratios of musical scales and planets led Pythagoras to believe that quantitative laws of nature could be found in all subject matters.

Now, in the first place, as we have seen, it has been doubted whether Thales was concerned with the question, 'What is matter?' It has been suggested that his question was rather as to how things began. But this receives no mention. Second, it is doubtful whether Pythagoras reached his view that all things are numbers by trying to answer the question, 'what is matter?' It seems that his philosophy may have arisen by an entirely different route. Third, this passage seems to imply that there is some connection between the view, which is mentioned in the second sentence, that things have a quantitative aspect, and the view, which is mentioned in the first, that things are numbers. But the one is surely a far cry from the other. And last, whereas as Aristotle says (see *Metaphysics* 985b23 - 986a3, 987a20 - 22, 989a99 - 990a32), it seems that all that one can say is that *one can perhaps salvage* from the confusions of the Pythagoreans a dim realization that things have a quantitative aspect, Brumbaugh has no hesitation in attributing the full awareness of this to them.

Not a book then, for the beginner. It might perhaps interest those who already know about the Presocratics, Plato and Aristotle, since it does raise some philosophical questions. But I must confess that I found it difficult to see this book as anything more than an example of that type of education, familiar to us from Salinger, which seems to deserve to the full Heraclitus's strictures about the learning of many things which does not teach understanding. Hence we find on p. 47 a not particularly illuminating comparison between Heraclitus and a Japanese poet, Basho, who said:

'An ancient temple pond; jump of a frog; the River of Heaven.'

Very nice poetry, no doubt, but what has it got to do with Heraclitus?

BRIAN GRAHAM

THE ELIZABETHANS AND THE IRISH, by David Beers Quinn. *Cornell University Press*; London; *Oxford University Press*. 40s.

During the sixteenth century the older Gaelic society, already deeply disturbed by centuries of sporadic English aggression, was subjected to a

policy of coherent attack by a modern nation for the first time. By Queen Elizabeth's death the English conquest was almost complete. Pro-

fessor Quinn's book is a study of the attitudes which this struggle produced in the victors, and of the means by which the shock of contact with an alien and inexplicable people enhanced the *jeoigneu* self-consciousness of Englishmen at the beginning of their colonial adventures.

English politicians, soldiers and travellers wrote reports of their experience in Ireland, from which Professor Quinn has assembled an excellent picture both of what they found there and of the ideas and prejudices which frequently, distorted their account; he makes frequent use of the conclusions of research on Irish sources to correct or explain these distortions. What emerges is the complete lack of sympathy in the great majority of the reports, together with a religious conviction of the duty of the English nation to propagate its virtue of Englishness, which makes the Cromwellian massacres in the next generation easy to understand.

The English testimony is coherent in the extreme; there is general agreement that Irish society is a conspiracy of robbers. The looseness and permissiveness of Irish society shocked newcomers from a country where submission to a central authority had become the only political virtue, and a man without a master and visible means of support was automatically classed as a criminal. The English administrator viewed with horror a country where crowds of people – from highly respected poets to itinerant prostitutes – moves freely from one little jurisdiction to another, where the law instead of hanging sheep-stealers allowed monetary compensation even for murder, and where primogeniture and even marriage, the basis of the feudal law of property, were irrelevant to society; property consisting mainly in land and cattle, and belonging not to individuals but to families. Grazing was the most important form of production, and people and animals migrated every year to the summer pastures. Obviously one could not keep a check on such people; Spenser comments 'This keeping of cows is of itself a very idle life and a fit nursery for a thief.'

The resolute agreement to see nothing in Irish society but organised crime led these commentators to ignore the forces making for stability, such as the judge of the *brehon* law, or the poets who perpetuated a complex culture, or the Church. All these are dismissed as corrupt, since they could not be incorporated into an anglicised society. The lack of understanding which this shows was probably based on ignorance of the Irish language; Professor Quinn does not give details of the knowledge of Irish

displayed in all of his sources; but it appears that while Stanyhurst, brought up in Dublin, understood some, most travellers, like Fynes Moryson, boast of their ignorance. Perhaps this is why a large number of the accounts seem to be based on conditions found in Ulster, where Hugh O'Neill lived in the traditional style but was in constant diplomatic communication with the English administration, understanding it better for having been brought up in England.

The Elizabethans found in Ireland the anarchy they feared at home; one can recognise, in the anarchic background of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* with its great and unpredictable wildernesses and its few safe strongholds, the nightmare landscape of Ireland.

The picture of the English attitude which this book provides is clear and consistent; the picture of Ireland is necessarily a series of illuminating flashes. Details of diet seem to bring the society as a whole alive; the Irish ate very little bread but a great deal of meat and fresh vegetables. This looked miserable to an Elizabethan eye, although a modern taste approves; to the outsiders it seemed to show that the Irish were hardly civilised at all in the European sense, and led to speculative comparisons between Ireland and America – this is the material for one of the most interesting chapters in the book. But Professor Quinn's account is necessarily limited. It does not pretend to disentangle the delicately complex relations of Gaelic society and the older English colonies; and thus we hear very little of the towns, or of the activities of the Dublin parliament, or the amount to which Irish customs had been taken up by mediaeval English settlers; nor does he develop the question of how much of the information given by the English travellers had been gained from Old English sources. Also there is little attempt at sorting out regional characteristics, though he prints as an appendix an account by William Gainsford which alludes to varying habits of dress in different parts of the country. However the main emphasis of the book is not on the state of Ireland but on the place it occupied in the Elizabethan consciousness; as a description of this it should be extremely useful to both historians and literary students. There are several marvellous illustrations, from a Dürer drawing of a group of Irish soldiers to a crude woodcut of a woman delousing a man's head, all of which add an extra dimension of reality to the encounter of two such different societies.

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