

meditation upon what goes before them in the history of the soul of Mary. This is therefore the main theme, a series of contemplations of the soul of Mary.

His way of taking principles straight out of the theology (even the metaphysical) books and showing how their light shines through the ordinary truths, that we are used to, is customary on the continent but rare in England. He is one of the few, the very few, who do it well.

There are forty-seven chapters in 164 pages; forty-seven reflective devotional essays, progressive, connected, carefully and surely bringing us to a better understanding of the mind and heart of our Mother. He condemns, *en passant*, the very strange idea that has got about lately that our Lady's knowledge of the divinity of Jesus was at first not only imperfect but non-existent. This whim of one or two writers (who are not by any means authorities in Marian theology) should, I think, be left to die of inanition. It has no support among serious students of the theology of our Lady.

GERARD M. CORR, O.S.M.

CHRISTIANITY IS REVOLUTIONARY. By Maurice Fraigneux, with a preface by Gonzague de Reynold, translated by Emma Craufurd. (Cassell; 12s. 6d.)

M. Fraigneux is concerned with the problems that face Christians today, but, rather than highlight those problems and examine our approach to them in isolation, he prefers to paint a gigantic backpiece that shows our modern problems in perspective; and he does so by indicating how the Church of Christ has met similar problems in the past.

It is not just with the Christian era that the author is concerned because with a real sense of history his backpiece begins with the Jews and with God's message to them: 'I am the Lord thy God.' Using the prophets as pegs for his theme, he traces the religious revolution maintained by the prophets throughout Israel's history.

The element that M. Fraigneux finds in the Jewish prophets—as he later does in the Church's prophets—is love, love of God and our neighbour. Conscious as he is all the time of the modern social problem and seeing the need for tremendous charity to solve it, we need not be surprised that the social part of the message of the prophets is brought out. The stand that the author of Ecclesiastes made against social oppression is clearly shown and the same is done for the other prophets described.

There was a great hope that never ceased to breathe through the history of literature of the Israelites and this was fulfilled and crowned by Christ. Again the message offered was a spiritual one based on love, a message which raised humanity to hitherto undreamed of heights.

The second part of the book is devoted to the revolution worked time and time again in the Church by St Augustine, St Dominic, St Francis, St Ignatius and St Teresa. This part leads on naturally to an explanation that although the revolutionary nature of Christianity can be illustrated by picking out such highlights, the revolution itself is a continuous one so that the whole history of the Church appears as an unfolding of the successive phases of a continuous revolution.

This revolutionary nature of the Church, its evangelical spirit, needs to remain faithful to its initial orientation because it can easily go astray. Yet while this danger does exist it does not justify checking the revolutionary spirit. Side by side with the reforms of the prophets must be mentioned the work done by councils, the development and the enrichment of the heritage of theology, philosophy and liturgy. Each of these developments owes its origin to the revolutionary spirit and the Church, on pain of sclerosis, must always be sending new blood through its arteries.

As the Church faces the world today this new blood is very necessary. The author finds no real cause for discouragement as he examined the present position, but the need is always there for the new blood—in this case among the laity as well as among the clergy.

R. P. WALSH

EARLY FATHERS FROM THE PHILOKALIA. Selected and translated from the Russian text by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer. (Faber & Faber; 35s.)

The *Philokalia* is a collection of the writings of the Eastern spiritual fathers, edited by the Metropolitan Macarius of Corinth and a monk of Mount Athos, Nicodemus, and published in 1782. (It is interesting to note that the copy of the first edition in the British Museum was presented by the Hon. Frederick North, younger son of the Lord North who was received into the Orthodox Church in Corfu in 1791.) A century later Bishop Theophan Govorov, 'the Recluse', translated the work into Russian, re-editing and considerably enlarging it. It was from this Russian version that Mr E. Kadloubovsky and Mr G. E. H. Palmer produced the volume of *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, published by Messrs Faber & Faber in 1951 and noticed in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT at the time. And it is from the same *Dobrotolubiye* that the same translators now give a further selection of spiritual writings in general. Of the nine writers represented, St Antony the Abbot, St Isaac the Syrian and St Maximus the Confessor are at least familiar names; the others are less well-known: Mark the Ascetic, Abba Evagrius, Nilus of Sinai, Abba Dorotheus and an unidentified Theodore. All these lived long before the Church in the East and the Church in the West had so disastrously fallen apart; but