

BLACKFRIARS

It is perhaps a little hard on Dr. Brown that his book should have appeared so soon after Mr. Church's on the same subject (*The Italian Reformers, 1534-1564*; Columbia University Press, 1932), and harder still that he should have to confess that he has not had the opportunity of reading it. Mr. Church's is a somewhat larger book; his method is chronological, and his scope rather wider. But Dr. Brown's work is by no means superfluous. For he has caught and attempted to convey certain aspects of his subject which hardly come out in the American book, and there is plenty of room for both.

H.O.E.

THE USE OF POETRY AND THE USE OF CRITICISM. By T. S. Eliot.
(Faber & Faber; 7/6.)

This is a book which should draw the attention of theologians and philosophers, of all those, that is to say, whose concern is with reality and the synthesis of reality. From this point of view Mr. Eliot is the most significant of living English critics, not merely because being a poet he presumably knows what he is talking about, or on account of his wide and accurate scholarship, but because he realizes that one cannot criticize poetry without, in the long run, asking the question what is its relation to reality as a whole, and especially, what is its relation to God. He does not answer this question: it is sufficient that he posits it. For, as he points out, from Matthew Arnold to Mr. Richards the relation between religion and poetry has been confused by making poetry a *substitute* for religion. Only those who appreciate the absolute nature of poetry (and of art in general) can appreciate this temptation: to those for whom art is an extra like jam the problem will not be evident. It is difficult to think of an English writer who has seen the issue as clearly as Mr. Eliot: T. E. Hulme perhaps: but his fundamental affinity, in spite of obvious differences, seems to be with Johnson. One can only regret profoundly that he is unable to accept the traditional metaphysics, which, allowing to the full, the absolute nature of art, as it does the absolute nature of philosophy, points out that the very glory of these absolutes of the natural order demands a supernatural glory to ensure their validity and completion.

In these lectures he indicates the course of English criticism and its relation to the social changes of the times. He shows that the usual contrast between creative ages and critical ages is far too *simpliste*. Criticism is inevitable as soon as we begin to think about our poetic experiences, to compare them and to organize them into a pattern. 'You cannot deplore criticism unless you deprecate philosophy,' And the moment when men are

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forced no longer simply to enjoy poetry but to ask its why and wherefore 'seems to be the time when poetry ceases to be the expression of the mind of a whole people.' Thus Mr. Eliot's studies begin with the Renaissance, with Campion and Daniel and Sidney, continue through Dryden and Addison and Johnson, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, Matthew Arnold, until we reach 'The Modern Mind.' It is an interesting process: as the poet becomes more and more isolated from society so criticism becomes more and more urgent and fundamental. With Dryden we meet 'for the first time a man who is really speaking to us.' His effort is 'really analytical.' Addison popularized this criticism: as Johnson remarked, he was a man who 'being superficial might be easily understood.' The criticism of Wordsworth, at the dawn of the industrial age, was that of 'the seer and the prophet whose function it is to instruct and edify through pleasure.' In Coleridge we reach 'a richness and depth, an awareness of complication which takes [his criticism] far out of the range of Dryden,' and he brought attention 'to the profundity of the philosophic problems into which the study of poetry may take us.' Mr. Eliot is, very rightly we feel, very hard on Shelley: his ideas are the 'ideas of adolescence,' a 'schoolboy who knows how to write'; but he estimates highly the value of Keats' remarks in his letters: not that Keats had any general theory; 'he was merely about his business'—the highest use of poetry. With Arnold we come to a man with a broad and balanced knowledge of poetry, but personally haunted by a scepticism which he regretted, and which led him to advance the 'substitute' theory mentioned above: as Mr. Eliot wittily remarks, he was the first to 'ordain' the poet. Finally, in our own time, 'the modern mind . . . comprehends every extreme and degree of opinion': the criticism of the Abbé Bremond: the criticism of Mr. Richards. Mr. Eliot provides an amusing commentary on the latter's 'Spiritual Exercises' for the appreciation of poetry: and he indicates the significance of the remark: 'poetry is capable of saving us.' Thus we reach the stage of complete awareness of the problems involved in the mystery of poetry—one may remark that Rimbaud, that '*mystique à l'état sauvage*' has reached it some time before—and the progress of criticism has not been altogether vain if it has brought us, as it has, face to face with the problem of God.

Mr. Eliot's style is not boisterous: he does not rush upon us with the jolly simplicity of those journalists who say the last word on the last book in the Sunday newspapers. Reading him is very like reading Aristotle—the truth is *ploughed* up by a sharp plough in a stiff soil. That is why it is impossible to

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summarize the riches of his book—the incidental issues he discusses and enlightens—for example, the valuable contribution to the question of the relation between poetry and belief in the poet's mind, in the lecture on Shelley and Keats; or his precision as to what we mean by *communication* in poetry. It is definitely a book for thought: there is no wastage: it is one of the finest examples of economy in writing in our time.

A.M.

Now I SEE. By Arnold Lunn. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

'Autobiography or argument?' enquire the publishers brightly. Both, they reply. We would rather say that it is the same thing, for to Mr. Lunn, argument, good stout religious argument, is plainly the breath of life. He has argued his way into the Church, and now that he is there he does not intend, so he says, to stop arguing. 'Thank God,' says he, 'there are still many problems to solve.' His way of solving problems, however, is a characteristic one. When he was a very new boy at Harrow, and found himself in a difficulty, he set about solving it by the simple means of tweaking the Headmaster's gown. He has gone on through life tweaking gowns whenever he desired to receive information, and always he seems to have been treated as he was by the delightful headmaster, who gave him the required information, and wholesome entertainment beside.

He gives racy descriptions of a variety of distinguished persons whose gowns he has successfully tweaked, including Father Knox, who appears in the character of the Reluctant Fisherman, and Mr. C. E. M. Joad, with whom he made friends as a result of first attacking him violently in the press and then inviting him to lunch. There is an amusing account of how he preached in St. Mary's—wearing an undergraduate's gown because it was the only one he was entitled to—and dealt so unemotionally with the claims of reason in religion that a Buchmanite was heard to wonder, with typical impertinence and smugness, what sensual sin could be keeping the preacher from Christ. But though the dust jacket promises that the book is scandalously amusing, we could find—though of course we looked with interest for the spicy bits—no passages answering to this description.

Mr. Lunn 'enjoyed every moment' of his search for truth, and having found it, he has already begun to pursue with equal zest the congenial task of communicating it. He has set forth the reasons which brought him into the Church, touching on a great variety of questions in a manner both lucid and readable, and we hope that this **book** will find its way into many public