

of formation a widely accepted false philosophy of mysticism, the most dangerous of all kinds of false philosophy.

Mr Warner Allen's first defect is one about which it may seem both presumptuous and unkind to speak: but it does seem that he is rather incautious in his estimation of his 'timeless moment'. It seems hardly likely from his description that the experience which he was privileged to enjoy during a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was what Plotinus speaks of as union with the One, and Plotinus's union with the One, though no doubt a true mystical experience, does not seem to be at all the same thing as what Catholic mystics mean by the Transforming Union. There is a very long road between. Besides the innumerable counterfeits of mystical states, often due to physical causes, which are not at all easy to distinguish from the real thing, there are a great range and variety of states and experiences which are genuine 'timeless moments', stops of the ordinary movement of the soul, touches which are outside the bounds of thought and not expressible in language. Most of them are not mystical in the proper sense at all and are very far indeed from the final Union with God. Failure to distinguish between the nature and effects of these states and moments, all in their way genuine and valuable, and to assign them to their proper place in the spiritual life according to the traditional wisdom of the Church, can lead to very serious confusion.

But our deepest disagreement with Mr Warner Allen must be over the two most essential parts of his interpretation of his moment. He holds that the mystical union is not properly speaking a union at all but a consciousness of our pre-existing identity with the Absolute Self: we are not raised to union with God, we *are* God and become for a moment conscious of it. There is no need to spend more words on the deadliness of this error. It may be as well however to mention that the present reviewer has elsewhere given reasons for supposing that this is not the normal thought of Plotinus about union with the One, as Mr Warner Allen thinks, and it is doubtful whether any passage in the *Enneads*, interpreted in the whole context of Plotinus's thought, necessarily bears this meaning.

The second point on which we must utterly disagree with the author is his contention that the cosmos, the world of experience, is the 'incarnation', the necessary and everlasting expression of the Absolute. The two together make his philosophy of mysticism one absolutely opposed to Christianity.

A. H. ARMSTRONG

POLITICS AND MORALS. By Benedetto Croce, translated by S. J. Castiglione. (Allen and Unwin; 8s. 6d.)

The book is a collection of distantly related political studies based on the philosophic Liberalism of the author. Signor Croce is eighty years of age, but he preaches with unremitting vigour his doctrines of the utilitarian nature of politics (and non-moral character of the State), a spiritual unity that can be understood only in terms of

succession, a process whereby 'what is useful is continually being transformed into what is ethical'. The book is perhaps more of a postscript to, than an epitome of, Croce's philosophy and criticism, but a postscript containing nothing with which we are not very familiar. Signor Croce still believes intensely in his Liberalism. In elucidating the problem of liberty and the relations of individual morality to the State, he does not, however, get much beyond bidding us to find out how to act 'in a manner suitable to reality, which is neither radical nor socialist, nor conservative, nor liberal'.

While showing some appreciation of the vital importance of Catholicism in a world and an Italy all but disintegrated by the disease of war, Signor Croce is still capable of writing of the Church as 'completely unproductive in the field of thought and culture, though she partially succeeds in concealing her aridity in these fields by borrowing methods, ideas and results from lay thought'. (What the precise distinction between 'lay' and 'clerical' thought is, we are, incidentally, not told.) Here and there the translator has given us some very difficult reading.

J. F. T. PRINCE.

WHATSOEVER HE SHALL SAY: the first Theophila Correspondence. By Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications, Oxford; 5s.)

This attractive book may be described as the first instalment of a correspondence-course in the spiritual life. It is cast in the form of letters passing between an imaginary Theophila—a girl in her later 'teens—and the author. Theophila, a devout Catholic, is dissatisfied with her religious practice, feels that her religion is a mercenary and self-centred thing, and calls upon Fr Valentine to impose a divine order upon her devotional chaos. Her letters are charmingly conceived, impulsive, very feminine and not a little inconsequent. Resisting their inconsequence—which is more superficial than real—Fr Valentine contrives to impart a considerable amount of solid instruction in the fundamentals of religion. He is concerned, first of all, to give Theophila a proper conception of God, both in his transcendent Majesty and in his loving Immanence. Having thus established Theophila in a sound religious attitude, he passes naturally to the vital topic of prayer, about which he has much to say that is of the first importance. These, in fact, are the two major topics of his book: God and prayer.

We have nothing but commendation for the teaching of this book, and we welcome the mode of its presentation. The average reader, disinclined to take up and peruse a formal treatise on the spiritual life, will—we believe—be attracted by the informal approach of this book, and reading it with ease and interest should profit greatly by its admirable instruction.

JUSTIN McCANN, O.S.B.

A CATHOLIC HISTORY OF WESTON-IN-ARDEN (1849-1929). By Rev. J. B. Hickson. (Walker; n.p.)

This little book, written by a former parish priest of Weston-in-Arden, holds matter of interest for English Dominicans, seeing that