The translation is in good clear English, avoiding the pitfall of pedantic fidelity to the Latin on the one hand, and of transient vernacular on the other. There is, of course, a difficulty about this procedure: distinctions in the original tongue cannot always be conveyed in a translation. There is something to be said for the judicious introduction of key Latin terms in brackets. Alternatively, elucidation can be left to the teacher (for presumably few will study De Officiis without the inspiration of one who has gone before).

Mr Higginbotham provides an introduction of just the right length, explaining Cicero’s indebtedness to the earlier philosophers, the circumstances in which he set about diffusing philosophic thought amongst the Romans, and the fortunes of his influence through the centuries down to our day. A prefaced analytic table sets out the topics taken up by Cicero for treatment in the De Officiis. Twenty pages of notes at the end explain Cicero’s references to historical figures, places, events and laws. There is a useful diagram of Cicero’s varied writings and their dates of appearance. And the book ends with an index of proper names in the text. There is no index of subjects, but this deficiency is partly made good by the aforementioned table. The book is attractively printed and bound, and makes a very workmanlike contribution to the Ciceronian revival.

Mr Higginbotham is the senior classical master at an English public school. Presumably he had his own upper sixth form in mind in publishing this book, an example which could well be followed by schools generally. In view of the current tendency for university departments of classical studies to broaden their bases, the book should be equally applicable to the early years at the university. And not only for students of the classics: those reading philosophy and European history and literature could take it up with profit.

G.W.R. Ardley

The Greeks and Persians. Hermann Bengston and others. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 70/-. (NB: H. Bengston is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Munich).
This book is the fifth volume in a series comprising the Weidenfeld and Nicolson Universal History, and covers the period from 550 to 323 BC, i.e. from the foundation of the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus to the death of Alexander the Great. This period is one in which the greater part of the Ancient Middle East — the lands which had given birth to Civilisation itself, and had seen its first tremendous flowering in all realms of human activity — fell under the sway of a new world power, the Empire of the Medes and Persians. The first chapter, by Prof. Bengston himself, and the last five chapters, by specialists in their own particular fields — Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and Arabia, respectively — give a summary of historical events and cultural developments in the Middle East during this period.

But this was also the time when the Greek world attained to its finest achievements in its own special brand of civilisation, and these, more fully documented in the surviving material — both literary and archaeological — than is the case with the Persian Empire, occupy fourteen further chapters by Prof. Bengston.

So far it might seem that we have here two entirely separate spheres of civilisation, artificially enclosed within the covers of one book because of their fortuitous contemporaneity. But, as Prof. Bengston shows, this is indeed far from being the case. Over the whole of the period the Greek and Persian worlds were in close and constant touch; often these contacts were of a cultural and friendly nature, — scholars (e.g. Herodotus) and merchants moved freely between them, and fertilising cross-currents were not wanting. Unfortunately, however, things did not rest there: in fact the most notable contacts were on a political and military plane, and Prof. Bengston's narrative introduces us to the long series of hostile confrontations which ensued.

It was Cyrus himself who conquered the Greeks of Asia and the off-shore islands and added them to the nascent Persian Empire. A revolt in these territories was crushed by Darius, who then went on to expand his dominions in the direction of European Greece, — a policy which culminated in the mighty expedition of Xerxes (480 BC). After the defeat and repulse of the Persians came the counter-attack, spearheaded by the League of Delos under the leadership of Athens, and the Asiatic Greeks
were “liberated” too, only to fall under the increasingly despotic control of the Athenian democracy. When the former allies, Athens and Sparta, fell out with each other, Persia was eager to seize the opportunity, financing Sparta’s unwonted activity at sea which destroyed the Athenian Empire and brought the Asiatic Greeks back under Persian rule.

The Greeks grew weaker and weaker with their incessant bickerings, and in 386 BC the Persian King imposed a general settlement on the Aegean World. But Persia too was increasingly racked by rebellions and civil war, and the way was open for the rapid rise to power of a new state, on the borders of Persia and Greece Proper, a state half barbarian, half Greek: the Kingdom of Macedon. In the next fifty years Macedon imposed itself more and more upon Greek affairs, ending with the establishment of a Pan-Hellenic Confederacy, in which Macedon was the senior partner. The ideological cement which was intended to hold this union together was the prospect of a united Greek crusade against Persia, to avenge the insults of the past and obviate their repetition in the future. The next twenty years saw Alexander the Great achieve this end, topple the Achaemenid Dynasty from power and create a unified empire embracing the Greco-Macedonian and Persian realms. Although as a political unit this empire did not long outlast Alexander’s lifetime, as a cultural, social and economic factor of great potency it transformed the world of both Greeks and Orientals, and created a new age, that of Hellenism. Thus after two centuries of conflict and confrontation, the two worlds that form the dual subject of this composite book merged and so created a new world, the topic of the next instalment of Weidenfeld and Nicolson’s Universal History.

It can be seen that the coverage of this book is considerable in space, time and variety of content, and it would all seem to have been presented sanely, eloquently, and in a balanced and comprehensive manner, which cannot fail to be of value and interest to all who read it. Though most of it was originally composed in languages other than English, it has been translated in a lucid and fluent manner, and awkwardness of expression is successfully avoided. There are eight maps, and thirty seven illustrations (plates of photographs in the centre of the book). These are excellently reproduced, and well chosen, though, not unnaturally,
not everybody would have made an identical choice! Among a number of misprints and mistakes, without which no book seems to appear in print these days, one particularly glaring example is found on Plate 29, labelled "Bust of Plato", where the bust itself is clearly seen to have been labelled by its creator: ZHNON (i.e. Zeno)!

A good book, strongly recommended for serious students of the period, who desire a general, well-documented and fairly detailed introduction to the subject.

R.G. Cowlin


A one-volume history of philosophy covering some fifteen centuries, from the Old Academy to St. Anselm, is a brave undertaking. Some years ago, Copleston traversed the field in a polished way in the course of his monumental survey of philosophy, from its beginnings in the 6th Century B.C. to the present-day frontiers of Russell and Wittgenstein. Copleston is informative, humane, and comprehensive, but necessarily brief.

Professor Armstrong has adopted a different plan. Following the style of the Cambridge composite histories, he has recruited a number of authorities, each to write on a particular topic. P. Merlan treats on Greek philosophy from Plato to Plotinus; H. Chadwick on Philo and the beginnings of Christian thought; A.H. Armstrong on Plotinus; A.C. Lloyd on the Neoplatonists; R.A. Markus on Marius Victorinus and St. Augustine; I.P. Sheldon-Williams on the Greek Christian Platonist tradition; H. Liebeschütz on Western Christian thought from Boethius to Anselm; and finally R. Walzer on Early Islamic Philosophy. The editor provides an introduction in which he endeavours to bring some unity into this mosaic.

The work is designed, the editor tells us, "to show how Greek philosophy took the form in which it was known to and influenced the Jews, the Christians of East and West, and the Moslems, and what these inheritors of Greek thought did with their heritage during, approximately, the first millenium A.D.". (p.xii).