

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF LORD ACTON AND RICHARD SIMPSON,
Volume III, edited by Josef L. Altholz, Damian McElrath and James C. Holland.
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975. 369 pp. £14.

This is the third and final volume of the letters which passed between Sir John Acton (Lord Acton halfway through) and Richard Simpson, the proprietors and editors of the *Home and Foreign Review*, the quarterly successor of the *Rambler*. It confirms my opinion that the publication of the whole of this correspondence was unnecessary, though it will no doubt be useful to experts on the period. The most interesting letters should have been selected and printed entire, thus disposing of the editors' bugbear about Cardinal Gasquet's omissions and alterations, and this would have made a volume which might have been paperbacked for students and others. For the truth is that the majority of the letters do not illuminate the characters of their authors or the Victorian scene. Most of them are to-and-fro editorial worries over contributions, proofs, printers and costs, with bibliographical queries and answers which demonstrate Acton's extensive learning and knowledge of the archives of Europe, but do not add to ours. Nor are the difficulties of finding jobs for deserving convert clergymen in the British Museum and elsewhere of riveting interest a century later.

There are only two or three letters on the decision to end the review, as a result of the papal brief addressed

to the Munich Congress at the end of 1863, and Acton appears to have been glad enough to make an end, partly because the paper was no longer selling well and partly because Simpson and Wetherell, the assistant (paid) editor, could not agree. Simpson felt the loss most, but his health was not good and he was able to give more time to his Shakespearean studies. Acton's occasional remarks on Roman and English politics do not add anything to his published articles and there is very little from the crucial year of the first Vatican Council, though quite an exchange after Acton had published a letter in *The Times* and come into collision with Manning, in the controversy about the civil allegiance of Catholics which culminated in Gladstone's pamphlet of 1874 and Newman's celebrated reply, the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, which is barely referred to here. Just because Acton and Simpson knew each other's views so well their comments on current events are scrappy and allusive, though Simpson is often amusing on the Ultramontanes—Coffin, he says, is a good *foolometer* to Manning's views. The modern editors elucidate every reference with great industry and, as far as I can judge, accuracy.

MERIEL TREVOR

DURKHEIM ON RELIGION: A Selection of Readings with Bibliographies, edited by W. S. F. Pickering. *Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975. 376 pp. £6.95.*

Durkheim is well established in the sociological pantheon. As such he is a frequent victim of the quick summary, and his views on religion are peculiarly susceptible to this treatment. Religion for Durkheim, so a thousand notebooks must run, is the product of society. It expresses the way men first made sense of their world, or (more exactly) the way men actually *made* their world. It's a kind of primal act: the common existence that makes society also makes religion. When men come together—in particular in ceremonial assemblies—an emotional effervescence is generated and, since this is experienced as overpowering and external, it gives rise to the notion of the sacred. This

in its turn evokes the collective ideals and the respect for them that bind society together. It is in this function of integrating society that the nature and origin of religion is to be found. Religious symbols turn out to be at the same time symbols of society and when people worship the gods they are really worshipping society. In the famous phrase, God is society.

So the introductions and the critiques often go, and it hardly seems to matter if the summary is crude. One can now move on to what the next founding father of sociology has to say about religion.

William Pickering, thinking otherwise, provides the materials to be more thorough. Jacqueline Redding