

REVIEWS

most vital Society in both the ancient and modern world its story can be made as thrilling, more thrilling, than that of any political institution or military exploit. We would emphasize, however, that this criticism is not a defence of religious history as at present taught. In fact, Mr. Worts' protest is valuable: it may awaken religious teachers. And in any case the objection does not detract from the actuality and importance of this book. It should be in the reference section of every staff library and in the possession of every school-teacher of history.

AELFRIC MANSON, O.P.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE NATURE OF HISTORY. By H. G. Wood.
(Cambridge University Press; 6/-.)

Nineteenth century Liberalism was, in its religious aspects, a perverted form of Christianity. Christianity became in fact synonymous with Progress and Humanitarianism. Mr. Wood is a contemporary representative of this Liberal school.

Indeed, had Mr. Wood omitted "Christianity" and confined the title to "The Nature of History" his book would have met with far wider approval. The first chapter, *Christianity and the Nature of History*, is a discussion on the nature of History itself: an analysis of the statement that the importance of an event "must be either in its significance as a link in a chain of still more significant happenings or in its embodying uniquely some intrinsic values." Mr. Wood rightly supports the second alternative and consequently the reasonableness of the embodiment and foundation of Christianity in concrete events in Palestine.

Grant the historical significance of Christianity and then the question of Jesus considered as a Leader becomes of extreme importance. It is quite true that social forces prepare the way for great men, but to emphasize this truth in order to discount the decisive influence of the individual factor in history, as Kautsky does, is erroneous. Kautsky holds that social trends, not leaders, are responsible for new organizations. By an analysis and refutation of Kautsky's theory of Christ, Mr. Wood proves the creative character of great men in History and the error of the Materialistic Interpretation of Christianity.

Christ was not only a Leader but the Son of God and He came when He did because the fullness of time had come. Mr. Wood illustrates the fact of "the guiding hand of God in History" by an excellent description of the Roman world into which Christ was born. The ancient world was in definite need of a religion, and an investigation of Augustan literature reveals that the intelligentsia and particularly the Stoics were formulating theories necessary for a better world. Christianity fulfilled the need of the Roman world but, paradoxically, was instrumental in creating a tension

among the Jews: the tension between Jewish universalism and Jewish nationalism.

Mr. Wood's theory in *The Prophetic Interpretation of History* concludes that there is a moral law evident in history, though contemporary judgment of morality may be narrow. The historian needs moral standards and judgments because morality is a factor in history and because he needs a criterion for his own judgments of history. This chapter includes an excellent summary and critique of Lord Acton's views of Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History*.

The general defect of the book is that it leaves one wondering what precisely the Christian Interpretation of History is. The Christian theory of History is an integral part of the Christian Revelation, and this revelation is essentially an historic one. It is based on the solemn *berith* or covenant of God with Abraham and his descendants at a specific point in time. The fulfilment of this covenant was the Birth, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. Israel was the instrument of God's Redemption of mankind. The Crucifixion is the core of Christianity. *There* is the reality of God's marriage with man.

The Christian views History as the process of acceptance or rejection of this "New Life" in the world. Every action, every decision, has therefore an eternal significance. Eternity has entered into time. It is the drama of the struggle between the Kingdom of God and the world; the great events and persons in history are the instruments of God. Finally, the purpose of history is the completion of Christ's work, the final incorporation of the human race in Christ and offered through Christ to God. This is the specific Christian Interpretation of History. Mr. Wood has failed to observe this, or rather has confused it with the ordinary Providence of God in the world.

P. W. SINGLETON.

CHRISTLICHE EXISTENZ. By Erich Przywara, S.J. (Jacob Hegner, Leipzig; RM. 4.50.)

Fr. Przywara is likely to remain little known in England: English readers unused to philosophical German might well be so frightened by his style as to despair of understanding him. Those who have seen only his contribution to the *Monument to St. Augustine* may have received the same impression from the look of Mr. Watkin's translation; that piece of work seems to us to deserve all praise, but it serves to illustrate the difficulty of making Fr. Przywara accessible to an English public. For *Christliche Existenz* is a piece of Catholic Apologetic published at a popular price, and yet the whole construction both of thought and expression would need altering in order to bring its ideas