

BLACKFRIARS

LETTRE SUR L'INDEPENDENCE. By Jacques Maritain. (Desclée de Brouwer; 5 frs.)

M. Maritain has been getting himself into trouble. Having had the nerve to contribute to a new periodical of Leftward leanings, it was rumoured (of course) that the Catholic sage was purring on the Muscophile hearth-rug. Even France is not immune from that kind of thing.

True, the Leftward periodical did not come up to expectations. But M. Maritain vigorously defends his action. This pamphlet is his apologia. But its importance is far wider. It is a timely essay on the necessity of bringing Christian philosophy down to brass tacks; a splendid statement of the policy of penetration demanded of the Christian in the modern world.

"To know is to transform." Not in the sense of the Marxist principle of the unity of thought and action. But Marx's axiom is "the hypertrophy of an important, misunderstood truth. . . . Philosophy *as such* can and must come as near to the domain of human action and policy as is possible for a kind of knowledge which is concerned with generalizations and with universal laws."

The rest of the pamphlet applies this principle. From it follows the necessity for the Christian to preserve intact his independence—the liberty of the sons of God—while throwing himself unremittingly into everyday concerns. "The Christian must be everywhere; and everywhere he must keep his freedom"—the autonomy which is given him by grace. Worldly instinct—the servile sociological instinct of least resistance—tempts Christians to shut themselves up complacently in a closed system, "a man-made fortress behind whose battlements the 'Good' are gathered to war against the 'Evil' who besiege them. But spiritual instinct, which comes from God, demands that Christians scatter themselves in the world which God has made to bear witness to it and bring it life. . . . The central problem of our time, from the point of view of a Christian philosophy of history, is the problem of the reintegration of the masses, separated from Christianity chiefly through the fault of a Christian world renegade to its calling. . . . How shall men, separated from us by battlements of age-long prejudices, pay any attention to our faith if, instead of reverencing their souls, their aspirations, their spiritual difficulties, we remain shut up in goodness knows what sort of pharisaical isolation? . . . The Christian does not give his soul to the world; but he must *go to* the world, speak to the world, *be* in the world, in the very heart of the world . . ."

The author inveighs splendidly against the "illusion and inertia" of the smug *bien-pensant*, with his "bitter and wilful

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ignorance of his neighbour and of the most certain realities' of life. Self-complacent in his battlemented citadel, he makes no attempt to acquaint himself with the 'humanity, the goodness, the incarnate heroism' of those he regards as his foes. "The truth is that the good and the bad are everywhere mixed together, even in the Church; and the image of a fortress or a citadel ought, in the present state of the world, to give place to that of an army on campaign. The existing battlements are those not of a Christian but of an apostate world. We must indeed defend all that remains of human and Christian values, but we must also, so far as human effort can, create a new world, a Christian world. The Church herself indeed, born of God and above time, is a city enclosed by walls; by a marvellous paradox she is perfectly enclosed because she is universal, and not only the baptized but all men of good will belong to her. But it is a great mistake to confuse the Church, the Kingdom of God in pilgrimage here below, but wholly centred in eternal life, with the earthly social structures of the political and temporal life of men, even though they may be called Christians."

The pamphlet concludes with a plea and a plan for new, far-sighted, political formations—very different from the sectarian, opportunist "Catholic parties"—whose object will be to revolutionize society in accordance with the principles of 'l'humanisme intégral' of which M. Maritain is the most distinguished exponent.

Yet some have thought M. Maritain a "mucker-out"!

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

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AN AUGUSTINE SYNTHESIS. Arranged by Erich Przywara, S.J., with an Introduction by C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed & Ward; 12/6.)

It is six years since the fifteenth centenary of the Bishop of Hippo drew men's attention once more to one whom we can rightly call the greatest teacher ever raised up by God for His Church. A centenary may be expected to bring forth a considerable amount of literature of a more or less ephemeral character. But in the case of St. Augustine the volume has been incredible and the quality admirable. We need only instance the magnificent *Miscellanea Agostiniana* from Rome and the *Miscellanea Augustiniana* from Holland.

In the present volume Father Przywara has arranged an immense series of extracts presenting the Saint's teaching on Truth, Faith, the search for God, on the Incarnation and the Mystical