

Even if one admits that the restriction in time had in this instance its undeniable advantages, one cannot help wondering on the other hand what kind of similarities the great historian of Fascism might discover between the French Revolution and Fascism if he could now carry his investigation further into the later stages of the Revolution.

H. G. SCHENK

POLITICS OF BELIEF IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE: Lacordaire, Michon, Veuillot. By Philip Spencer. (Faber; 25s.)

Mr Spencer has attempted to do for English readers a service which has already been done supremely well by M. Adrien Dansette for the French public—to give an account of the history of French Catholicism during the last century, and it is impossible not to compare these two works. If Mr Spencer fails, at least partially, where M. Dansette has succeeded, it is not only because Mr Spencer's task is a far more difficult one; it is also due to his choice of method. 'It is of course', he says, 'an arbitrary choice, to pick out Lacordaire, Michon and Veuillot', but was it really necessary for the choice to be such a bad one? Lacordaire was undoubtedly the greatest orator of his time, but his triumph was ephemeral and he did not succeed in influencing his age. As for Michon, he was not a very interesting or edifying clerical oddity, no more significant than Lamartine's *protégé* the Abbé Thions, and Mr Spencer's only excuse for introducing him appears to be that he was 'the professional rebel, the predestined insurgent, the protestant Catholic'.

The only two Catholics who had the prophetic insight to understand the real significance of the world in which they lived were Lamennais and Ozanam, because unlike Dupanloup, Montalembert and other Liberal Catholics, they realized that the modern world with which the Church should be reconciled was not the bourgeois world; and that it was the social and not the political problem which was to dominate our times. It is their failure to understand this which made the Liberal Catholics so futile and ineffective. Even their stand against the proclamation of papal infallibility was a mistake, and it is Pius IX, Veuillot and the *Intransigeants* who, paradoxically enough, took the first step to reconcile the Church with the modern world, by strengthening the spiritual authority of the Holy See, a strengthening which made possible, eventually, the abandonment of temporal power. This was the great work of the Vatican Council and it did not, as Mr Spencer suggests, 'kill for good' the chances of Christian reunion. It merely dispelled a number of illusions, never seriously entertained, at least by Catholics, such as that 'dissentient' Churches could 'claim parity' with the Catholic Church.

Mr Spencer is fascinated by the character, and above all by the

personality, of Veuillot, who was certainly the greatest of all Catholic journalists—‘the greatest journalist of the century’, he says. He records the facts about Veuillot and politely refuses to comment. Yet the story of Veuillot carries with it a lesson, and it deserves far more attention and study from Catholics than it has had up to now. Veuillot had great faith but little charity, and for over forty years, in the name of the Church, he belaboured his enemies, religious and political, with a vicious and merciless pen. He invented and exploited to the full a particularly aggressive type of apologetics which Ozanam described as merely serving the purpose of exciting the passions of believers, and no single Catholic bears a greater responsibility for the development of anti-clericalism in France during the nineteenth century. His ‘keen encouragement’ of the *Cercles Catholiques* of Albert de Mun does not mean that he had any real understanding of the social problem. On the contrary, as M. J. B. Duroselle has pointed out, he entirely neglected social problems, and only mentioned the subject in order to harry and discredit those few ‘social Catholics’ like Ozanam and Armand de Melun, believing that Society always needs slaves.

JAMES LANGDALE

JONATHAN SWIFT. By John Middleton Murry. (Jonathan Cape; 30s.)

It is with something of a shock that one realizes that Mr Middleton Murry is now one of our elder critics. He made his mark in that brief interlude between the wars, before our literary culture had succumbed to war and crisis mentality. In those days profitable variations could still be played in the game of classicism *versus* romanticism; Mr Middleton Murry was of the latter party, and produced a series of brilliantly intuitive biographical studies in which interpretative tact was combined with psychological sympathy. Now he has returned to the field of pure letters after a long interval, and, paradoxically, his very full and judicious study of Swift’s life and work has an almost old-fashioned appearance of solid completeness about it. Against the modern tendency to separate biography from literary appraisal he has resolutely set his face; such a separation is indeed impossible with Swift, for everything he wrote was related to personalities or politics. Mr Murry has made himself master of the rich materials provided by editors and scholars of Swift from Elrington Ball to Professor Nichol Smith (who unfortunately appears in the Preface as ‘the late D. Nichol Smith’). The result is a book which lacks the occasional flamboyance of the earlier studies, and in which intuitive judgment is always guided by erudition and commonsense. Swift’s mind, like his prose, sheds a cool, dry light, though passion and hysteria may lurk underneath.

In the earlier part of the book a more thorough attention than usual is given to the Moor Park period and to the poems belonging to those