

## Book Reviews

What are the ideas of *Esprit*? They are not easily determined in the effortless flow of generalities that partly afflicts this as it does most French reviews. The publisher's address gives a hint to strengthen the impression of a veiled Catholicism. The emphasis is on the spiritual dignity of man, the integrity of *persons*, the chances of shaping our present disorders in this light. Admirable, but there is a danger of more fog unless all the ideals implied cluster round that definite, visible, living, fighting, compact nucleus, the Church. How explicitly they should be grouped, that is a question of tactics. Precipitate reference to the Church's solution of modern problems can annoy. Ecclesiastical practice is not always as good as its theory. Certainly *Esprit* is not churchy.

In this first number, the most interesting section is *Confrontations*, which contains a valuable record of a visit to the U.R.S.S. (with an account of an anti-religious show at St. Isaac's—'la religion et Dieu sont knock-out'), complemented by a judicious essay on the communist religion by Nicholas Berdiaeff. Under *Les Evénements et les Hommes* our attention is caught by a laconic showing-up of one aspect of Big Business, its irresponsibility. An entertaining extract from the procès-verbal of the Oustric Inquiry speaks for itself; the director's pathetic ignorance of what the *Omnium industriel* was about, his air of injured innocence. *L'Echo de Paris*, a newspaper with Catholic support, also falls under criticism as a specialist in jingoism. So, too, *Candide*, one of the *laquais de forges*.

Is it mortifying for an Englishman to observe for how little *l'anglo-saxon* counts in a French review that calls itself international? But perhaps this is meant to be a French Number.

N.W.T.G.

JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES. By Felix Klein. Translated by W. P. Baines. With a prefatory letter by H.E. Cardinal Verdier. (Longmans, Green & Co.; pp. xi-363; 10/6.)

Each new book about the Gospels raises the old question of books about books. For the Gospels are almost submerged under an ever rising flood of literature, and after all, as Père Lagrange wrote, 'c'est à eux qu'il faudra toujours revenir.' The question is wholly good, because it forces people to keep things in perspective. It has been said that the purpose of writing about the great authors is the removal of obstacles to an aesthetic experience. It might be said that the object of all books about the Gospels should be to remove obstacles to a religious experience ('les évangiles,' says Père Lagrange again,

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'sont la seule vie de Jésus-Christ qu'on puisse écrire. Il n'est que de les comprendre le mieux possible.'). Otherwise they are mere erudition, or worse. It is true that nothing can take the place of what Mr. Desmond MacCarthy so happily described as, letting the 'attention wash over and over passages' until they 'develop gradually like negatives in the darkness of the mind'; but this process is bound to develop also a desire to make sure that nothing is being missed. To this desire all books on the Gospels should minister, whether they are commentaries for the learned or mere retelling of the story in modern idiom for the simple. Between these two classes, and probably of more general use than either, lie the books of which Père Lagrange's *L'Évangile de Jésus-Christ* is an outstanding example, and to these the book under review also belongs. They bring the results of intensive study within the reach of people who lack opportunity for it, and give us the best of both the erudite and the popular worlds. Cardinal Verdier says in his letter to the author, 'Si les substructions de votre livre reposent sur une science solide et exacte, vous n'en faites jamais montre.' In this manner M. Klein tells again all the Gospel narrative that shows Our Lord with His Apostles. We see His Person and teaching through their eyes and follow His public life with their anxiety. And on the other hand we can see their gradual, almost irritatingly gradual, growth in comprehension, and watch His divine patience preparing them for the part they are to play. It is all made exceedingly vivid. The reader will return to the Gospels with many obstacles removed. Relations and incidents that had been only half noticed are brought into new relief; teaching that had lost its freshness through inattentive familiarity with the mere words (that great enemy of full appreciation) is brought to life again. Should people read books about books? Yes, if they are like this one.

As the way in which this book is written is really of importance and not simply a question of decoration, it is a pity that the translation is not better. It does not read really well: the French order is too often followed and there are far too many commas. The English is sometimes rather pompous and sometimes a little undignified. Now and again it is regrettable, as in, 'Jesus, choosing amongst his admirers,' 'the crowd, commodiously installed on the shore,' the use of the word 'adepts' for men who followed Our Lord, or a number of words or phrases like 'diaphanous vase,' 'pretention' for 'pretension,' 'demands' for the petitions of the *Pater* and elsewhere, 'griefs' where 'grievances' or 'wrongs' is meant. The English rendering of biblical quotations is not an improvement on the or-

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dinary versions and involves such lapses as 'Do you not see . . . that thy disciples are breaking' and 'My children and I am in bed.' There are a few minor misprints, e.g., lusciviousness, charitable, unforgettable. The book is clearly printed and comfortable to read; but though it is arguable that an index was not needed, it would have been a great convenience to have had a map.

A.E.H.S.

IF WE WANT PEACE. By H. N. Brailsford. (Hogarth Press; 1/6.)

To Mr. Brailsford the problem of securing permanent peace involves the growth of an international society, sanctioned by a super-state, of which the League of Nations is the promise. The forces opposed to the fulfilment of this ideal are enumerated clearly, but not, perhaps, with adequate stress on their relative importance. There is in Communism a 'crusading' spirit, impatient of all authority not its own; who knows that Fascism may not become similar? Mr. Brailsford sees how feeble a substitute the mandatory system is for predatory imperialism. He exaggerates in stating that the sovereign state is dead. Dying, it may be, but many centuries may pass before it is ineffectual in determining world-policy. Finally, we would differ from Mr. Brailsford on the influence of financial power. It is certainly very strong and certainly very undemocratic: but is it necessarily anti-pacific? A co-operative commonwealth of states might conceivably arise from the economic forces that govern the world to-day: nor is there any other motive to which the pacific idealist can turn, save a very unformed international public opinion. *Non taïbus auxiliis* is an inadequate answer, for the cause of peace has too many enemies to be able to pick and choose its friends.

Mr. Brailsford concludes an admirable exposition of his thesis by the antithesis of Law and Power, without, however, dealing with the ultimate nature of Law, which he recognises as the necessary foundation of organisation for world peace.

S.H.

LA PEDAGOGIE SCOLAIRE EN RUSSIE SOVIETIQUE. By Eugène Devaud. (Paris; Desclée de Brouwer, 1932; pp. 224; 10 fr.)

This sixth volume of *Questions Disputées*—a series edited by Charles Journet and Jacques Maritain—is a painstaking compilation of quotations from Soviet speeches and writings that deal with communist education. M. Devaud, the author, keeps