

Reviews

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, by Jean-Yves Calvez S.J. and Jacques Perrin, S.J.; translated by J. R. Kirwan; Burns and Oates, 42s.

This book should prove to be a most valuable addition to the English literature on Catholic social teaching. It is important, however, to appreciate its limitations, which arise from the nature of the task the authors have set themselves. Their aim is to offer an outline of the social teaching of the popes from Leo XIII to Pius XII. They have done this well and authoritatively. They show how one pope has taken the teaching of his predecessor and developed and clarified it in accordance with the needs of the day. In doing this, the authors draw on a wide range of sources. In the use of encyclicals they go beyond the two best known, *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, and they also make use of many papal letters and other documents (including many not bearing the personal signature of the pope himself).

We see in this book how, although the fundamental teaching of the Church can never change, it may be developed in the light of circumstances, and, from time to time, stress laid upon those moral principles that are most in danger of being neglected. Since the authors' purpose is to outline the teaching of the popes themselves, they have been obliged to stick almost exclusively to principles and to avoid any temptation to discuss the application of these principles to particular situations. Indeed, they only discuss principles where these have featured in recent papal teaching. To have extended the scope of the book, either by including a discussion of the application of principles to the problems of the day, or of principles which have not featured prominently in recent papal teaching, would undoubtedly have added greatly to the book's appeal to many readers. On balance, however, it is probably better that the authors should have limited themselves in the way they have done. By doing so, the reader can be reasonably sure that he is getting a clear statement of principles, backed by the very highest authority. Had the authors gone beyond this, he would always have had to ask himself how far the authors were stating the authoritative teaching of the popes and how far they were indulging in their own speculations.

The authority of the Church in the social order is one of the topics that are discussed at length in the earlier chapters. This discussion is of fundamental importance, for there is such frequent misunderstanding of the nature of the Church's social teaching. On the one hand, there are those who expect that the social teaching of the Church should offer them a ready-made programme for political action and social reform. Instead, it offers a set of moral principles by which any given social order and any programme of reform must be judged. Where the pronouncements of Church leaders—even the popes themselves—go

beyond the statement of moral principles and extend to moral judgments on particular situations or suggestions for reform, they are speaking as individuals, not with the authority of the teaching Church. On the other hand, there are those who try to minimise the force of the Church's teaching in this field, even with regard to principles, by arguing that none of this teaching is embodied in the decrees of councils or in solemn papal definitions. This is true, but it overlooks the fact that the Catholic is bound to accept what is universally accepted by the Church, and the privileged position of the pope in the *magisterium* of the Church, even when not making one of his more solemn infallible pronouncements.

It is only possible to indicate very briefly the scope of the main part of the book. It begins with a discussion of the person and society, showing how the Church's social teaching is based on its knowledge of the true nature of man. This is followed by a discussion of the relationship between charity and justice. Then comes a chapter on *Need* and a series of chapters on the various institutions whereby needs are satisfied. Towards the end are two chapters on social antagonisms and class warfare, a chapter on trade unions and a final chapter on the Church's plan for society.

At one point, the authors' treatment of their subject seems inadequate. In the chapter on trade unionism, they raise the question of the closed or union shop. They begin by quoting papal statements that point to the dangers of such an institution for the ordinary worker. Later, however, they suggest that there is *some kind* of obligation on the worker to join the union. It may be significant that, at this point, no authority is quoted, in a book that gives some 750 references in the course of 441 pages. Are the authors at this point introducing their own ideas? If so, it is unfortunate that they should have done so without making it clear, or without outlining the kind of safeguard that is needed before the closed or union shop could be morally justified. Nevertheless, in fairness, it must be added that the text really gives no support to some of the more ardent advocates of the union shop, and particularly no support to those who would try to make the obligation on the worker to join one of commutative justice.

To conclude, one may perhaps refer to the final chapter, where the authors succeed in making clear the attitude of the popes towards 'corporations' that include both workers and employers. These were clearly welcomed by the popes as a *possible* form of *voluntary* association. There is nothing in this approval which in any way takes away from their support of trade unions composed only of workers. Above all, it is made quite clear that support for this kind of joint organisation is not support for state corporatism as it was practised in Italy, as many people mistakenly believe.

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THE ENGLISH MYSTICAL TRADITION, by David Knowles; Burns and Oates; 2js.

The central portion of this book is given to separate studies of the four principal