

REVIEWS

CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY

LA REFORME DE L'ÉTAT. (Editions "Orientations"—Collège Philosophique de La Sarte, Huy—Belgium. 15 B. frs.)

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE MODERN STATE. An Œcumenical Approach. By Nils Ehrenström. (S.C.M. Press, 6s.)

Two books on a Christian orientation to the problems of the modern State. Both books represent a quite special school of thought in their own sphere, and both represent it very well. The Belgian book is a collection of papers by eight prominent Catholic social thinkers and writers, French and Belgian, including three priests (two Dominicans), and is the report of the (second) annual week of Social Studies held at the House of Studies of the (Walloon) Belgian Dominican Fathers in 1936. The 1935 report was published under the title *Le Corporatisme*, and this is a sequel. The second book is a study of the attitude of the various Christian bodies to the modern State, an investigation of the definition (if any) of a Christian Social Ethic according to the various creeds. It was to have been published for the Oxford Conference, and the whole approach is "œcumenical," i.e., not attempting to synthesise divergent Christian opinion, but to exchange thought "with reference to the distinctive mission of the one universal Church in the world to-day" (p. 25). The author therefore states each view fairly and fully, and betrays adherence to none.

Both books start with a problem. Society has changed, the power of the State has changed, relation to authority has changed. New problems have arisen under the pressure of history to confront the Christian.

At La Sarte all were agreed that the present mechanism of the State, especially in France, was inadequate, hence *La réforme de l'Etat*. "The most interesting papers," says P. Rutten in the introduction, "are those in which men, who are both men of study and men of action, explain their schemes for grafting into the modern State a corporative system" (p. 6). M. Coquelle-Viance desires to see society restored to its wholeness, its fulness of activity, hierarchically ordered under a supreme power. He echoes La Tour du Pin in holding that the political function of the people is not to govern (this is a myth and a deception), but through its professional corporations to control (p. 48). And the "prince" or supreme authority must be quite detached from the people and their corporations. For M. Coquelle-Viance, a parliamentary "régime d'opinion" is a hopeless obstacle to the reconstitution of society. M. Prélot, however, after a very interesting historical sketch of the French Parliament, would have it not abolished, but modified, liberated from the money-power, freed from administrative and technical duties it is in-

competent to discharge, and co-ordinated with a corporative hierarchy. P. Renard insists on a gradual reconstruction of the existing order, and sees the whole problem as an adjustment between the State ("le construit") and the Nation ("le donné"). He invokes as examples (not models) of a natural growth the English and the Swiss democracies. P. Arendt explains how a stable Government can intervene economically, aided by a Parliament for control only and by Consultative Committees representing the professions. M. Laloire provides an account of the various interpretations of the idea of the Corporative State, and studies the possibility of their application. Lastly M. Paul Chanson and M. Coquelle-Viance explain more fully the dependence of their doctrine of the "Libertés Corporatives" on La Tour du Pin, who alone at the end of the last century fully saw the practical possibilities of a Christian corporatism, and the dangers of liberalism and capitalism (p. 131). The book is an interesting collection and well-documented, and it is good to have a concise presentation of the thought of these writers.

Mr. Ehrenström, after explaining the œcumenical standpoint, starts with the Catholic view of the State. It is well presented, with constant reference to the Encyclicals. The whole Thomist conception of the natural law, the hierarchy of being and its perfection not destruction by Grace is given as the foundation for social and political thought, with the subjection of everything to the service of God—the end of the Church thus determining the end of the State. The chapters on Orthodoxy and Anglicanism are brief owing to lack of definite doctrine: Orthodoxy inclining to a sort of tragic dualism in the world, and Anglicanism contenting itself usually with a definition of a practical *modus vivendi*. Then there is a long and good chapter on modern Continental Protestantism, with its *Theologie der Ordnungen*, and re-awakening to the ideals of the Reformers, communion with God through Faith making man truly personal and truly social, etc. The main exponents quoted are Gogarten, Hirsch, Barth and Brunner. There follows a focussing of Lutheran opinion, and of Calvinist views. By way of conclusion (though there is really no conclusion, but a statement of the urgency and the hope of a solution) there is a sorting out of the problems raised: the limits and functions of the State, the attitude of a Christian, the right use of force, the problems of peace and justice.

The book is a store of information: the explanation of the points of view are as lucid as their diversity will allow, and the impression is vivid of the turmoil of earnest discussion at the present time, from which it is hoped true spiritual principles will emerge. The footnote-bibliographies are excellent. The information and documentation will be greatly appreciated by the Catholic student, though the hopes of œcumenical unity seem rather bewildering.

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