

## *Book Reviews*

**DE BONIS ECCLESIAE TEMPORALIBUS.** By Marius Pistocchi.  
(Turin; Marietti. Pp. viii, 489. Lire 15.)

In this book will be found an accurate and learned commentary on the canons of the Codex which legislate for the acquisition, retention, and administration of ecclesiastical property by the Catholic Church and the Holy See. One is conscious nowadays of a notable tendency to emphasise the Church's spiritual mission, often with a view to eliminating her native right to have and to hold worldly possessions. Hence arise despoliations and unjustifiable levies on the part of civil authorities. The present work should serve as an antidote, since it clearly shows that the very constitution of the Church as a perfect and visible society demands she should have a free and independent dominion over temporal goods, which are indispensable for the attainment of the supernatural end for which she was founded.

Church property can only serve its purpose when it is freed from legal entanglements and administered in accordance with the Canon and the Civil Law. A knowledge of these laws may be gathered here. In all cases the canons, some of which may be obscure in themselves, are accompanied by very ample expositions showing their relation to the Roman law and modern civil law.

The style is a little diffuse, and often parenthetical, which does not make reading easy. Greater clarity would have been given by dividing up the matter with indications of the contents of each section, and with differentiations of type. The book would also be much more valuable for the purpose of reference if it had an alphabetical index.

A.F.

**GREGOIRE AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.** By Lord Ashbourne.  
(Sands; 6/.)

Lord Ashbourne's monograph on the political influence of the Abbé Grégoire is of considerable interest to any student of the French Revolution. It is admirably documented and its value is much increased by the author's freedom from bias. One example will be sufficient to illustrate his method; he contrasts Grégoire and Bishop Gobel by noting their different rôles on the 17th Brumaire and he does this by printing their speeches. Still it is unfortunate that the study is so limited in its scope. There is no attempt to treat adequately of Grégoire's lasting influence as a member of the Committee of Public Instruction, the work by which he should be chiefly remembered, or to esti-

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mate his position in the history of Gallicanism. This tends to place even his political activities in a false perspective since he had first gained political influence as a leader of the lower clergy, had maintained it as the ablest spokesman of the 'constitutional' priests and was to retain throughout life the mentality of a seminary professor. But though an authoritative biography still remains to be written, Lord Ashbourne has achieved that rare and admirable thing, an essay in objective history.

G.M.

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY, or The Witness of the Apostles to Christ. By the Rev. O. R. Vassall-Phillips, C.S.S.R. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; pp. xxxvii-506; 8/6.)

'Christianity . . . is essentially an historical religion' (p. 30), and it is fitting that this, the last book from a life devoted to the apostolate, should be an examination of historical evidence. We may show the likelihood of revelation, the reasonableness of Catholic doctrine, the desirability of Catholic life; but when people have been brought as far as 'It would be nice if . . . ' or even 'I wish it were . . . ' they will come to 'But is it true?' and at once we are on historical ground. Fr. Vassall-Phillips has carefully set out the evidence of the apostolic writings to the divinity of Christ, adding a short analysis of the testimony of the Gospels. Then, having shown what their faith was, he proceeds to show that their achievement is inexplicable unless that faith was true. Instead of the now familiar statement of the advantages that the Roman world of apostolic days offered for the spread of Christianity, this book considers the difficulty of the apostles' task and the almost insuperable obstacles with which Christian belief and morality were confronted in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman world of their time. Lastly there is a section on the identity of their faith with the faith of Catholics to-day. Critical questions are, in general, only lightly touched, and the book is intended for the educated man who is not a specialist. It is written with a warmth of personal conviction that is very attractive, and is commended in a foreword by the Archbishop of Liverpool. Catholics should not ignore it as meant only for outsiders; the author well says, 'at least for the great majority of Catholics . . . it is not God's will that they should live, so far as their faith is concerned, an absolutely inert mental life.'

Three points of detail may be mentioned. The sentence on p. 48, 'there is such a thing as an acceptance—more a reasonable acceptance—of Christianity with which the intellectual