

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF JACQUES MARITAIN.

Selected readings by Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward. (Geoffrey Bles; 25s.)

This book is to be welcomed in that it brings together in one volume those passages from the writings of M. Maritain that are both representative and expressive of his social and political philosophy. With certain exceptions, notably in connection with passages taken from *Man and the State* and *The Range of Reason*, the editors have made new translations from the French editions. Some of the translations are in places quite similar to earlier ones, whereas others are widely different.

The core of M. Maritain's social philosophy is to be found in his teaching on the Person and the Common Good. The book published in 1941 under that title (the English translation of *La personne et le bien commun*) was already too short and tightly condensed for clear understanding. In the book under review the excerpts from *The Person and the Common Good* total fourteen pages and represent less than half that short work. In view of the length of this new book of selected readings (nearly 400 pages) there would seem to be a lack of appreciation on the part of the editors of the fundamental importance of this notion of the common good in M. Maritain's social theory. While paying every respect to the greatness of M. Maritain as a thinker and as a Thomist it must be said that not every one can accept his distinction between individual and person (which lies at the heart of his doctrine of the common good) as that of St Thomas or indeed as valid. But the subject is too complex to pursue in a short review. The editors did well to invite the author to write a Preface. In expressing his gratitude to them 'for their interest . . . and for the pains they have taken in selecting these excerpts and composing with them a book with a unity and internal development of its own', M. Maritain has silenced in advance any possible criticism about the misrepresentation of his teaching by an injudicious selection of passages.

MURDOCH SCOTT, O.P.

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 16s.)

No Man is an Island is an absorbing book which achieves a very difficult task in a remarkably simple and sure way. It is much more than a collection of aphorisms on fundamental questions affecting the Christian life, hope, conscience, intention, vocation. Its title rightly leads us to suppose that the book will be about the dialogue between God and man, and man and man, whereby they grow in knowledge and love of each other. Its method is to bring to light the often hidden questions which make these reciprocal relationships vital. The true

term of the discourse must be personal to each reader. Hence he will find himself compelled to meditate and take time, co-operating with the author in a work of discovery. 'Although men have a common destiny, each individual also has to work out his own personal salvation for himself in fear and trembling.' It is the merit of this book to set this primary task firmly within the life of the Christian community, and its pages are instinct with a deep spiritual courtesy. 'If we love one another truly, our love will be graced by a clear-sighted prudence which sees and respects the designs of God upon each separate soul. Our love for one another must be rooted in a deep devotion to Divine Providence, a devotion that abandons our own limited plans into the hands of God and seeks only to enter into the invisible work that builds his kingdom. Only a love that senses the designs of Providence can unite itself perfectly to God's providential action upon souls.'

Fr Merton says that this is intended to be a simpler book than *Seeds of Contemplation* to which it is a sequel, but most people will probably find that at certain points they have to think a good deal before his meaning becomes clear. For instance he uses the term 'psychological conscience' for consciousness and develops an elaborate section in which this is contrasted with 'moral conscience'. While the drift of his argument emerges plainly enough, a more normal terminology would have made him much easier to follow. But it would be unjust to insist upon these defects in a thoughtful book which will yield its meaning to a patient reader. Fr Merton well deserves some of the sympathetic co-operation of the importance of which in the fullness of the Christian life his reflections have so much to say.

ÆLFRED SQUIRE, O.P.

PIONEERS OF POPULAR EDUCATION, 1760-1850. By Hugh M. Pollard.
(John Murray; 28s.)

Movements of reform are usually untidy. They are played against shifting elusive backgrounds by actors who are all producers before largely unappreciative audiences. Dr Pollard in this present work stabilizes the pattern and unifies the theme around a few central actors. He takes as his *point de départ* pre-revolutionary France and in a few vivid paragraphs he sketches the inadequate and miserable provision for the education of the poor, not only in France but in Europe generally. Against this background the work of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, founded in 1682 for the Christian education of youth, stands out sharply. Their lives were heroic but hidden and represented the centuries-old interest of the Church in education. A more deep-rooted spirit of revolt was also at work. The *philosophes*