

have become politically detached from the Vatican, it cannot and should not be without a providential reason.' These essays in Christian democracy bring us back once again to the pressing problem of the morality of means; to the primacy of the moral absolute over the political and the utilitarian. It is very easy to think of political, and even of politico-religious, problems in terms of expediency; but it is un-Christian. The withdrawal of the temporal bulwarks of the Church may be intended as a sign that there must be a purification of means. Christianity is surrounded by politico-religious enemies; it must meet them, not with their weapons, but with its own, with charity and with fidelity to absolutes, not with violence and opportunism. If we try to justify or condone immorality because it will lead as we think to the advantage of the Church, we are guilty of immorality ourselves, and we do a disservice, not a service, to the Church. There may be an immediate temporal advantage—religious establishment, or what not; but the ultimate effect will be disastrous to Christianity, and it is the ultimate effect we have to think of. The Church thinks in centuries, not in months or years.

Don Sturzo's studies are the fruit of practical experience (in the *Partito Popolare*) as well as of theory. The present book lacks unity and cogency from being a collection of papers; but there is none the less a very definite unity in them, for they all deal from one aspect or another with the essentials of Christian democracy. They will be found most useful if taken in conjunction with, and as applications of, some such statement of principle as Maritain's *Action catholique et action politique*; they deal with totalitarianism, with minority problems, colonies, the right to rebel, the rights of the citizen in time of war, and so on; sometimes they would be the better for a more complete survey of the scope of the problem under discussion; Christian democracy is not distinguished sufficiently from a parliamentary form of government; but they are all illuminating and stimulating. For the catholic, totalitarianism is not primarily a political, but a religious, problem; but it cannot be adequately understood, still less decided, without a real understanding of the relationship in general between morality and politics. That is why such a book as this is of value at the present time.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

LE VRAI CHRETIEN EN FACE DU MONDE REEL, Par Chanoine Michel Pfliegler. Traduit par l'Abbé Roblin. (Editions Salvator, Mulhouse; 15 frs.)

The Abbé Roblin, translator of this book, says in his Preface

that he has never seen 'so much new that is true and so much true that is new.' Canon Pfliegler must have written with the shadow of the Nazi invasion over Austria. He begins on the strain of Jeremias: 'Woe, Woe is to come. And God will not prevent it as flesh would have it, externally; he does not want to save temples of stone, but the human heart.'

From this he goes forward to suggest that there has been much in the lives of Catholics not far removed from the attitude of the Jews to Nabuchodonosor's invasion. They want to defend forms and external rights of the Church. They have not sufficiently examined their own conscience to find out if they and their practices truly represent God, and if the 'invasion' may not be a good thing if it will throw them back into a deeper spirituality. He reflects upon the difference between the Catholic doctrines and the lives of many Catholics. The profession is of an entirely new life. The practice differs little from others, and its failings become the greater and more hypocritical by contrast with the profession. How many pagans sincerely think it a duty to have nothing to do with a thing so unreal and containing so much hypocrisy? But if we had Life—'Life calls to life'—then they would come.

He discusses many aspects of Catholic life in a similarly challenging way. We attack other doctrines of life—but is it with understanding and sympathy? Is it not often rather with a narrow-mindedness that shocks the sincere pagan? Do we show the true strength of Christianity in our art? Is not much of it tawdry and a dishonour to the faith? Do we not take external attendance at public worship too narrowly as the sole test of Christianity? . . . etc. . . . etc. . . .

His criticisms are not simply criticisms. He suggests positive remedies, a Christianity re-understood to be ingrafted in men's minds according to their real needs. The book is a call to Catholic Actionists to make sure that they set about their work in the right way, with such an examination of conscience, trusting to a new life developed in them rather than to argument, protest or political assistance.

Over-statements are almost inevitable in such a book; *e.g.*, 'The Crusades were a false interpretation of the teaching of Christ.' But some were preached by saints, encouraged by Popes, and in the nature of defensive wars sanctioned by the traditional theology of the Church. Again there is an unfortunate relapse into use of 'Bourgeois' as a term of reproach and criticism of his 'petite religion personnelle.' Was not Saint Theresa of Lisieux a 'Bourgeois,' her religion 'personal,' her

adjective 'little'? There is a danger of losing something of the necessary perfecting of humility and the 'Inward Man' in the new preaching of Christianity as a cultural power.

In general the book is balanced in spite of such slips. Canon Pfliegler is large enough in spirit to be able to criticise constructively. And as coming from Austria, which was called till recently a Catholic country, it is a lesson of the bitterest practical experience.

FINBAR SYNNOTT, O.P.

NOTICES

POEMS. By F. T. Prince. (Faber and Faber; 5s.)

Mr. Prince has written an extremely interesting group of poems. They are interesting because he has those two prerequisites of the poet, a subtle apprehension of fine shades of experience, and the gift for recording those apprehensions in phrases and rhythms which are not so much a record of the experience as a distillation of the experience itself, so that the reading of his words is like lifting the stopper from a decanter of Burgundy and having before one at once the whole Côte d'Or.

It is this gift of the poetic phrase that Mr. Prince has most strongly developed as, for instance, here:

'The copper thunder kept in the sulky flanks of your horse.'

There is, however, a defect which is the complement of this gift of subtle, comprehensive and carefully-articulated phrases. The defect is that such phrases tend to dominate the poem; the main theme of it becomes obscured. The core of the poem is not sufficiently apparent to satisfy the mind that the juxtaposition of all these 'jewels five words long' is valid. It is as if Mr. Prince had written a set of Enigma Variations which were not completely satisfying in themselves, for the ear continually hungers after the lost theme. But no one can read these poems without being conscious of the rare quality of the author's experience, and without being enriched by the harmonics of that chord to which he has been attuned.

U.F.

WHY THE CROSS? By Edward Leen, C.S.Sp. (Sheed & Ward; 7s. 6d.)

NOTRE SŒUR LA DOULEUR. By D. V. Fumet. (Editions du Seuil; 12 frs.)

Two meditations on the problem of pain. Fr. Leen's book will serve at once as spiritual reading for contemplative and