

REVIEWS

CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY

CHRISTIAN POLITY. By V. A. Demant. (Faber & Faber; 7/6.)

It can be gathered perhaps from this statement what is the focus of the book: "In the Catholic view too the world order is perverted, and grace from beyond is necessary to change it and secure it for its true nature, i.e. its place in the Kingdom of God. Catholicism rejects along with Protestantism the Liberal conception of Redeeming Grace as in continuity with nature and world order. Nature is by grace not extended but restored. On the other hand the Catholic view holds that the redeemed man does know something of connection between God as Creator and Preserver and God as Redeemer in Christ." Catholicism as against Naturalism, against Liberalist Christianity, against Calvinism and Lutheranism: in these theological conflicts lie the issues of the real battle and struggle in which we are engaged. It is part of our Catholicism that we recognize that, but to see the truth of it and so begin to be prepared to assert our faith usefully (if not expertly) in the whole field of the socio-political struggle requires some such profound course of study as this book offers. The essays it comprises are given in an order which roughly reverses the order of their composition; knowing this, one can read the book backwards and follow a movement of thought that carries the conflict steadily upwards from particular encounters to the supreme issues of Creation and of Grace. The process is inductive. A soaring air-battle.

One of the most interesting threads of the doctrinal spiral works the heresy of moralism back to its implicit denial of Creation. There was something of moralism in it—one is comforted to learn—when they exhorted us, naggingly enjoined us to "be sociable," in the same breath and spirit in which they required us to get down to our books and make headway with our Latin grammar. "Because he sees that moral effort is required to combat the forces which tend to break up society, the moralist therefore concludes that society is the creation of moral effort on the part of man. . . . True, the maintenance of social health is the fruit of social effort, but only because there are forces in human life which threaten it . . . society, community, is something given: it is part of the givenness in creation." The waves reach out endlessly. They drown Mr. H. G. Wells and all causes of levelling and legalistic internationalism: "The voice of the Church, the body of the redeeming Christ, must recover from her theological heritage a doctrine of human community between persons and peoples, which declares unity to be present in countless spontaneous ways without legal and political machinery for unity. The Church has then to show how such unities are broken

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by sin." Sin then, incidentally, is bared as the essentially nihilist force it is, tearing down the fabric of creation. And the waves sweep on to carry on their crest the cause of what is being termed Christian humanism. "Throughout the whole Christian scheme perfection is not something to be created by man, but something to be recovered, a gift that has been lost"

If only the style and the form of this book were as luminous as the thought it would be a masterpiece. RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

HISTORY

A HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH. By J. W. C. Wand. (Methuen; 8/6.)

HISTOIRE DE L'ÉGLISE. By A. M. Jacquin, O.P. (Desclée de Brouwer; 2 vols.; 70 frs.)

In the first volume the Archbishop of Brisbane deals serenely with five centuries in 250 pages. His study will be found to possess all the qualities of the successful manual: quick concision, a factual accuracy and a patient lucidity of thought. Perhaps lucidity is its chief defect. The alien complexity of those five hundred years, the slow pressure of involved vested interests, the catastrophic influence of individual will, the tangled conjectural evidence are hardly conveyed by its clear sentences. The straightforward moral judgments and the neat summaries seem hardly to take into account the kaleidoscope of Hellenistic-Christian cultures and the intricate sophistication of Byzantine thought. The Anglican theological students for whom this series was primarily intended will find themselves among familiar certitudes under a very English sky.

A very different convention is illustrated by the *Histoire de l'Église* of P. Jacquin, O.P. "*Ce n'est pas un manuel—les procédés pédagogiques dont se recommandent la plupart des manuels ne donnent de la réalité qu'une impression trop fragmentaire et souvent fugitive.*" P. Jacquin is a Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the university at Fribourg, yet he represents in our generation one of the most venerable of French traditions in historiography; he is of the school of Tillemont rather than of Duchesne. These two volumes will perpetuate his influence, for they provide a convenient quarry for his fellow lecturers throughout the seminaries of the Church. They treat of the first seven centuries of Catholic history both among the Latins and the Orientals, they are marked by a capacity for objective accuracy, by a zest for minute compressed detail and by an impatience with the theoretic, while each section is concluded with a carefully selected bibliography of modern studies. Yet, as the chapters pass by slowly, P. Jacquin is seen to write with an increasing surety and freedom.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.