

REVIEWS

PIO NONO. A study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century. By E. E. Y. Hales (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 25s.)

The Italian Risorgimento, it is now pretty generally agreed, is in need of a considerable revaluation—a term used by historians to denote that the story which they have hitherto told is out of relation to the facts as they now see them. This is admitted even in England, where for so long the epic story of the movement held pride of place as the set-piece, the *beau idéal* of ‘a people rightly struggling to be free’; so that today even Sir George Trevelyan, the doyen of English historians, can be heard to say that if he were to rewrite his classic account of the movement he would undoubtedly place a markedly different emphasis here and there in the story—a notable admission coming from such a quarter.

All this makes it plain that Mr Hales has written a very timely book. He had also written a very important book. Pope Pius IX occupied a key position not only in the exciting, and often shallow, politics of Italian unification, but in the politics of Europe as a whole at a time when those politics were shaping our own world. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that an understanding of his gas-lit pontificate is essential to an understanding of our own atomic age. Mr Hales has given us the first serious study in English of this archetypal figure and his book is worthy of its theme.

And what a theme it is: the end of the Temporal Power—the oldest civil jurisdiction in Europe, and the creation of the modern papacy; the liberal pope who became in the eyes of liberals the arch-reactionary; the rise and fall of the Roman republic of Mazzini and Garibaldi and the establishment of the United States of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel; the vicissitudes of the flight to Gaeta and the capture of Rome, the breach in the Porta Pia and the white flag over the dome of St Peter’s; the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (so much more ‘unhistorical’ than that of the Assumption); the ‘snuffing out of progress’ by the Syllabus; the Vatican Council and its closing scenes—the thunder and lightning and the primacy and infallibility of the papacy.

Mr Hales does justice to all these crowded events. He does more: he is concerned to show not only what happened but why it happened. Especially is he concerned to show (with entire success it seems to us) why the Pope could not have acted otherwise than he did in face of the Risorgimento as it came to develop. He places the undoubted and abiding liberalism of Pio Nono against the liberalism of Mazzini and his

'religion of the people' and against the liberalism of Cavour and the 'free Church in the free State', and he shows that between the first and the last some accommodation was always possible, given more favourable circumstances and perhaps a little more straightforwardness on the part of the Piedmontese ('If we were doing for ourselves what we are doing for Italy, we should be called great scoundrels'), but that between Pius the pope and Mazzini the high priest of a new religion, no reconciliation could ever have been achieved.

Mr Hales' book is not only important; it is fair-minded. It is fair, for example, to Cardinal Antonelli: he acquits him of having unwashed ears but not of having doubtful morals, and he shows, at the same time, why a man of Pius's integrity could yet employ so dubious an agent.

Above all the figure of the pope himself comes through with convincing clarity, in his shortcomings and in his greatness—for greatness he had. Certainly not an intellectual, hardly a statesman, he was at all times and in all places a true man of God, with what the man of God sometimes lacks—a saving sense of humour: witness the story told by Mr Hales of the pope writing at the foot of a particularly atrocious picture of himself which had been presented for his autograph the words of the Gospel, 'It is I: be not afraid'.

To those who have been brought up on the cartoons of Tenniel and the echoes of the polemics of 'Janus', the portrait of Pius IX which Mr Hales paints will come as a surprise and, it is hoped, as a correction, for the pope who emerges from these pages is not the medieval obscurantist of that legend, with the thirst for spiritual domination: he is the ruler who, among all the rulers of the nineteenth century, saw furthest into the future.

WILLIAM PRICE, O.S.B.

MYTH AND RITUAL IN CHRISTIANITY. By Alan W. Watts. (Thames and Hudson; 25s.)

FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS. An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford. By R. C. Zaehner. (Geoffrey Cumberlege; Clarendon Press; 2s. 6d.)

SACRED BOOKS OF THE WORLD. An Anthology. By A. C. Bouquet. (Pelican Books; 3s. 6d.)

The comparison of religions has become a task of widespread interest and considerable urgency, but the problem of the method to be adopted is seldom squarely faced. All comparative studies involve a preselection of the material to be compared and the postulation of a standard of comparison. Whether the comparison itself yields more 'likenesses' than 'unlikenesses' will depend on nothing so much as this