

REVIEWS

notes of the discussions which followed, and *communicationes* from other members of the Congress. Many well-known names are here: Noel, Olgiati, Maritain, Garrigou-Lagrange, De Vries, Jolivet, to mention only a few. The papers are in various languages: Latin, Italian, French, German, English. Invidious to single out some rather than others for comment; impossible to comment upon all. It may be said that the actual account of discussions is, inevitably no doubt, disappointing (the first day of the Congress provides example, where the point at issue touched upon the Rome-Louvain debate as to the place of the argument from causality in the epistemological question), since it goes no further than statement of objection and rapporteur's answer. But on the other hand, from the presentment of many competent treatments of a single theme there emerges a conspectus of contemporary opinion which is both illuminating in itself and at the same time provides a basis of further thought and discussion. And though the tone of papers and discussion is of course academic, the issues discussed are radical: the place of the *Cogito* in thomist epistemology; the relation of hylomorphism to modern physics; the fundamental principle of neo-positivism; the thomist and the modern scientific notions of the constitution of bodies; a thomist philosophy of religion; the legitimacy of speaking of a "Christian philosophy." A book for the specialist, the technician; to him, a valuable document not only for the evidence it gives of the actuality of thomist thought throughout the world, but also for the positive lead it offers in many questions of contemporary importance.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

SOCIAL STUDIES

SOCIAL MESSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. By H. Schumacher, D.D. (Coldwell; 8s. 6d.)

"The sole purpose of this volume has been to offer, in organic form, a detailed description of the spiritual social forces of the New Testament," says the author in concluding his task. All the same it was no mean undertaking. Had it succeeded it would have been a shower of manna for the true Israelites who are plodding at the cause of social reformation. If it must be said to have failed, that is because it does *not* present in *organic* form the "spiritual social forces of the New Testament"; it presents them in the form of a dead logical combination. It tears the texts away from their living contexts, not perceiving that the texts themselves have expired in the operation.

It is impossible to get easy returns from the Scriptures. To get the living water there has to be a reaching down every time

to the source, with some labour (whether "scholarly" or otherwise) at the well-mouth. But in practice there tends to be the alternative of either drawing upon the Scriptures; or of imposing upon them, of dictating a meaning to them, of making them simply echo one's own doctrinal convictions, of gathering their texts as an adorning gloss for one's theological theses already established—that they were originally established by the Church and her theologians who for the purpose did draw upon the living Scriptural truth only makes the present practice appear more shamefully trivial. You take an accepted Christian doctrine, you measure it out on the pages of the New Testament, and you exclaim, "Ah, see how perfectly it fits. How fruitful the Scripture is. What great truths it proclaims!" But it is worse to do what this book frequently does: to tamper with the meaning of Scripture, and *then* to exclaim, "Why see the perfectly harmony with the *Quadragesimo Anno*. What inexhaustible fecundity!" The whole procedure is one of patronizing the Bible, of establishing its orthodoxy, of declaring it eminently quotable.

It is largely by a process of allegoric interpretation that our author induces the New Testament to supply the appropriate doctrine. If what Our Lord spoke as a parable be treated as an allegory, the elements of the parable which were intended to have no meaning except as parts of a whole story, as parts of the structure of one total single piece of representation, take on independent figurative meanings of their own: the way being thus opened to discovering any number of "Scriptural" lessons which in fact it was not the purpose of Christ to teach. The author's treatment of the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard makes a perfect model of this method of phantom reading of the Scriptures:

The following "important social principles" reveal themselves to him in this *parable*. (1) *The duty to work*. "Clearly the most obvious lesson insisted upon in the parable is that no man shall 'stand idle' in this world, as long as he is able to work." For does not the householder say to them in accents of conscientious misgiving, "Why stand you here all the day idle?"? (2) *Duty to offer work*. "Equally plain is the insistence of Christ on the duty of those in the capacity to do so, to offer work, etc." For here again the householder is "evidently" more concerned about the idleness of these fellows than about the needs of his vineyard. "The householder of the parable was simply in advance of his age, for he stood on an unassailable economic as well as moral basis." Certainly he did not stand for the principles of Social Credit. And so the exegesis proceeds . . .

Apart from its unsoundness, the inconvenience of this method is that it lets in a crowd of unwanted doctrines along with the wanted. It is awkward to find that Christ "evidently" recom-

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mended the practice of slavery—but there are His words, “And his lord commanded that he should be sold and his wife and children . . . ”; a little embarrassing to find that He insisted on the desirability of the banking system—but what could be clearer than His pronouncement, “Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers”’? etc.

The doctrine which the author takes along with him on his voyage of discovery is admirably sound Catholic doctrine. He brings it back safely.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

CATHOLICISM AND THE NEED FOR REVOLUTION. F. H. Amphlett
Micklewright. (Centenary Press; 5s.)

In this essay on Liberal Catholic sociology, the author sets out to meet the claims of humanism and Communism. He succeeds so well that the humano-communist christianity which he “evolves” bears no resemblance to that of the historic Christ and the historic Church. He candidly puts “the Church” into the dock, frankly admitting that she is riddled with individualism and “next-worldliness,” and cuts his Catholicism to a new shape to include all human interests in the “unchanging world of spiritual values.” His task is made easy by his whole-hearted adoption of the Modernism which the Church, in the name of Christ, condemned as non-Christian but which he maintains has found a home in the broad scope of Anglicanism. He attaches himself to the body of Anglican thinkers who began in the nineteenth century to reaffirm traditional social teaching and from the Anglo-Catholics he takes the sacramental principle to work it into his new theology. His interests are catholic and his theology is catholic. His modernist interpretation of the word sacrament enables him to embrace all that he finds in the human heart. “It is only too often forgotten that theological dogmas came into being in answer to the dictates of human religious experience, that the form which they took was conditioned by the fact that they existed to supply human needs, and that the dogmas are therefore closely related to human life.” (p. 112.) Those who deny that this is the correct interpretation of the origin of the Christian religion are summarily dismissed as Fascist! On the subject of Fascism, the author permits himself the use of harsh terms. “But if the Church is ruthlessly opposed to Fascism, it must decide upon its attitude towards Communism.” (p. 173.)

With the humanist he glories in the balanced excess. “It is this living dangerously which the Fascist mentality cannot understand.” (p. 145.) The ethics of Jesus “were essentially the