

## REVIEWS

### SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

CULTURE LATINE ET ORDRE SOCIAL. By the Most Rev. Martin Stanislas Gillet, O.P. (Flammarion; 12 frs.)

In these times when the foundations of Society are so much discussed it is as well to be reminded of the spiritual basis upon which all such talk rests. The material or mechanical means are, after all, secondary, and it is of the first importance that the principles which give cohesion to society should be grasped in all their starkness before the more immediate problems are broached. All thinking men know this, but how few are prepared to face these principles may be gathered from the day to day solutions which are characteristic of the management of public affairs.

That the head of one of the most active and influential bodies within the Church should have seen fit to devote some of his much occupied time to the composition of a work on this subject is in itself even more impressive than the mere fact of his having found time for it in the midst of his multifarious engagements. Père Gillet in his capacity of Master-General of the Dominican Order is in a specially advantageous position to sum up the essential features of the modern dilemma; not only was he trained to view the larger lines of social progress, but his present office compels him to put theory to the test of practical experience over a wide expanse of the earth. In this book we have the fruit of a considered judgment on modern thought. Right at the beginning of an inspiring foreword, which should be translated with the slightest possible delay in some thoughtful periodical, the distinguished author makes clear his use of the term *Latin culture* by defining it as the *sum of ideas, sentiments and habits which, since the beginning of the Christian era, form the most authentic blend of classical and Catholic culture to be found among the nations subject to them and known as the Latin people*. This last phrase, we are assured, is not used in any exclusive sense and is intended to embrace all who enjoyed the beneficial influence of Rome in the so-called ages of faith.

The root trouble is soon pointed out. It is because moderns do not know how to think, that they do not think. Adopting a quotation from M. Julien Benda he indicates that it is for lack of the civilizing influence of Catholic culture or tradition that present-day affairs are so chaotic in art and in letters as well as in social and economic fields.

Then comes the keynote which recurs with increasing insistence in every chapter. The trouble is laid at the door of the long-standing confusion between the classical notion of *person* as opposed to *individual*; the former has gradually been degraded so as to be for many sociologists nothing but a unit, a cell in the social organism. Resentment against this illusory sacrifice of personality on the altar of Society is at the bottom of all social discontent, and the sympathetic appreciation it is given in this thoughtful work should do much to make the earlier work of Père Gillet better known than it is in the English-reading world. "The name *person* is given to the spiritual principle which sums up, in the order of being, the constituent elements of the human compound into one unity and becomes the principle responsible for human acts in the order of action. While the name *individual* is reserved to that original totality which results in everyone from all the material but accidental elements which distinguish the body as by sex, race, temperament, heredity, etc." (p. 24).

Once this fundamental distinction is made it is easy to establish the respect due to an integral moral personality and also the role which such a person, when a Catholic, has to play in Society. So far there is nothing novel for a scholastic philosopher, but when it comes to the establishment of harmony between the secular common good and the common good of the Church the solution outlined is of interest to others besides the unthinking moderns. Whereas the humanist sees personality as endowed with reason and liberty and even responsibility, the Catholic sees something more than a principle of escape from determinism at work, nothing less than a creature made in the image of God and redeemed by Him in order to enjoy eternal life. Hence the necessity of establishing such a relationship between these beings and Society as will reconcile the ultimate end of man with the present good of Society. Men live in Society in order that they may fulfil themselves; man cannot ignore or evade Society, but he is governed by social justice whereas Society is concerned only with distributive justice.

It is precisely in the use of these juristic terms in which he is so expert that our author is most effective, and it would be a pity if their strangeness should serve to put off the lay reader, for they are the one sure means of elucidating the difficulties which surround this urgent problem. They amount to this: "The rights of man, the personal rights, are equal in all citizens, but the rights of citizens differ." This distinguishes the Catholic viewpoint from that of both liberals and socialists. Whereas for the former man is an abstraction, an individual, the latter err in regarding men only, the masses, at the expense of the individual.

This is perhaps the most fruitful chapter in the book since it

clears up certain misconceptions common even among educated people; if they are not frequently betrayed it is because common sense usually intervenes to prevent the absence of principles from betraying itself. The next chapter, which is devoted to Justice and Charity, points the way to practical execution by expounding in current style matters heavy with theology. Justice, we are reminded, is a purely natural virtue, while charity, which must temper it, is essentially supernatural, a grace, no less than "le trait d'union vital entre Dieu et nous." It is good to be reminded of these matters.

In the chapters on the social order and political activity due insistence is laid upon the guidance provided by the encyclical literature of the past half-century. The vice of present political organization is its bias away from the spiritual element in Society, so *it is essential that we should return to a human concept of social life where the whole nature of man, which is at once spiritual and material, is taken into account.* The problems of the family are placed in proper perspective, at the centre of Society. Then the crucial issue of education is thrashed out in its general lines with special reference to the adverse cultural effects of the Reformation. For Père Gillet as for all thinking Catholics, it is the exaggerated notions of individualism which form the greatest obstacle to progress, their exploitation by opportunist politicians and ignorant demagogues demand a super-human effort of Catholics. With grace on their side and a living culture to draw upon they have an enormous field before them in the reorganization of education; "il faut revenir à l'enseignement des humanités."

In the last chapter the author returns to his favourite topic of international relations upon which he has so many wise things to say. Just as the family is the force of a nation, so integral nations must form the foundations of lasting international agreement, but the Catholic insistence on respect for the supernatural is up against the materialism of international politics. Patriotism is a good thing and even indispensable, but as between individuals it must ever be tempered by Christian charity.

The publisher who would undertake to put within the reach of the English reading public a translation of this authoritative and much needed treatise will place a large number of thoughtful people in his debt.

HERBERT KELDANY.

RELIGION AND THE MODERN STATE. By Christopher Dawson.  
(Sheed & Ward; 6/-.)

Mr. Christopher Dawson has not, as most professional historians are apt to do, lost the ground from under his feet in dealing with present-day problems. Nor is his outlook limited