Reviews

THE SECULARIZATION OF THE EUROPEAN MIND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, by Owen Chadwick. *Cambridge University Press*, Cambridge, 1975. 286 pp. £6.50.

We all of us use certain general terms—*culture, civilisation, alienation, nationalism, revolution, fascism, racism. secularisation* — with immense confidence that we know what we are talking about. Called upon to stand and deliver, to give cash value to these cheques drawn on uncertain balances, we falter. The complexity of historical events and of their interconnexions is such that we pass easily from over-confidence to scepticism, from a clear vision of the pattern of the past to an experience of gross darkness. The Master of Selwyn gives us a bad time with *secularisation* but gets us home, soberer and wiser, in the end.

Professor Chadwick's Gifford Lectures are subtle and dense and it is not possible in a short review to give a succinct account of the argument. I choose as especially important the following points.

Firstly, it is very hard to show that a decline in religious belief and practice (assuming, that is, we have firm criteria for deciding when such a decline has occurred) is ever a consequence of *intellectual* changes brought about by experiment and argument. If men come to think that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile and that therefore it is idle to hope for the resurrection, this is never a consequence of straight argument and observation; it seems to be a consequence of two things: not only does a man come to feel no longer at home in a society subjected to shattering changes but also the picture of the world changes—the infinite spaces are *silent*, primeval dragons tore at each other in the slime for millions of years —and with this change certain ways of talking and feeling seem askew with how the world is thought to be. '*Genesis Chapter I is not true because men are descended from apes*. But the sense of depth, of movement, of process, of evolution, of a world in ceaseless change, this does not need assimilating like new information because it becomes part of the constitution of mind, and of the window through which mind looks out at contemporary events or structures' (p. 192).

Secondly, in good faith or in bad faith the common attack upon the Christian churches is that they are false to their own message, that they are to be condemned by the standards they themselves set out. A certain amount of this talk is humbug but not all of it. It is not accidental that religious persecution is remembered or —very commonly — misremembered. (This reviewer remembers an undergraduate writing in an examination paper: 'Galileo was burned by the Inquisition for denying that the earth was flat'.) It is as though underneath the often jolly-seeming process of detaching oneself from traditional religion there lay a vast disappointment, like an unhappy love-affair.

The third of what I see to be Chadwick's especially important points is that in the nineteenth century the kind of scientific criticism represented at its best by Huxley and at its worst by Haeckel was an effective attack upon vestigial Deism rather than upon Christianity. The Christian foundations were shaken by the historians. What had been foreshadowed by Richard Simon and the Maurists came to pass in the nineteenth century. Men varied greatly in their estimates of the consequences for Christianity. Extremes met: Loisy and the severest ultramontanes agreed that the appeal to historical evidence was idle and unorthodox; Newman, Duchêne and Lagrange went on thinking history mattered. If this involved raising questions about the Bible that earlier generations could not have envisaged or formulated, so be it. Only in our own

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1976.tb02293.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

day can we profit fully from the labours of our fathers in historical work.

The Fourth important point Chadwick makes is that Marx's view that religion is for the oppressed the heart of a heartless world, a necessary opiate for the exploited, seems to have very little to be said for it. No doubt the bourgeoisie wished, for discreditable reasons, that the workers were more religious; the fact is that many of the middle classes were genuinely religious, the workers in the great cities on the whole were not. The worker 'felt part of a class, distinguished from other classes in society. But he hardly used God to comfort himself. For he hardly used God' (p. 102). Some proletarians were of course fervent Christians, e.g. the Primitive Methodists of the West Riding. This was not always a source of comfort to the millowners. The opiate of the French workers was anticlericalism rather than religion. Down to the day before yesterday the Radical Socialists could always divert the workers' organisations from the pursuit of their interests by crying out: *Cléricalisme, c'est l'ennemi.*

Finally, Chadwick says something about the word secularisation itself. It begins as an emotive word: it means either the triumph of intellectual light over the darkness of superstition; or it represents a sense of doom: Jerusalem is laid waste and the prophets are killed. Nevertheless, we must strive to see it as an objective process. Chadwick attempts a definition: 'the relation (whatever that is, which can only be known by historical enquiry) in which modern European civilisation and society stands to the Christian elements of its past and the continuing Christian elements of its present' (p. 264).

He sees as an apt emblem of the to and fro movement of the European mind in relation to the Christian religion and its institutions the fluctuations in use of the Panthéon in Paris. It started out a church dedicated as a thank-offering by Louis XV for recovery from illness but was in the end financed out of the proceeds of state lotteries and was given a different use with every revolution from 1789 onwards. Now it is cold and empty, 'a national laicized memorial'. Comte had the mad but endearing idea of putting under the dome a statue of a mother and child—'Humanity caring'. Chadwick comments: 'What the later nineteenth century seemed to show was that no new Madonna would serve; that (if you did not want a museum or a car park) the only image which would serve was the former little child, at the breast of the former Madonna; understood in a new way, surrounded now not only by a fresco of St Geneviève but by an unprofaned Voltaire as well as an unprofaned Fénelon. Once the human race has an experience which it has found to be in part authentic, it does not let go' (p. 265).

This Gifford Lecturer knows how to instruct and delight, and does both in this book. I strongly recommend it to believers and to unbelievers; it purges and nourishes and tastes good as well.

J M CAMERON

THE TUBINGEN SCHOOL, by Horton Harris. *Clarendon Press*, Oxford, 1975. 288 pp. £9.50.

Dr Harris has now completed the second instalment of his trilogy. Strauss has been. Ritschl is to come. And here is what, in italic print and on his first page, he terms *'the most important theological event in the whole history of theology from the Reformation to the present day'*. He has assembled biographical material for eight theologians whom, oddly assorted though they are, he reckons together as the Tübingen School. After separate sections on each, he presents a more general description and evaluation of their combined achievement.

Dr Harris discerns the beginnings of the School in the publication of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* in 1835, which, in its denial of the miraculous element in Christianity, constituted a declaration of the irreconcilability of conservative and liberal notions of a theologian's work. Dr Harris has already written about Strauss (cf. my review-article in this journal, October, 1974, pp. 470-476); in this book he now attends to those who seemed to their pietist contemporaries to be sharers in Strauss's wickedness. The great man of the School, F. C. Baur, had, indeed, taught Strauss, but he was not popu-

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1976.tb02293.x Published online by Cambridge University Press