REVIEWS

GOD, MAN AND THE UNIVERSE: A Christian Answer to Modern Materialism. Edited by Jacques de Bivort de la Saudée. (Burns Oates; 35s.)

Every Christian, it is a commonplace, must be a soldier, even though his weapons may be only of the mind. So it has always been one duty of theologians to guide Catholics in their struggle with heretic or pagan, with the Marxist of today no less than with the Mohammedan of St Thomas' time. Though a single author is no longer equal to the task, and syntheses of the medieval type could hardly be produced by so radically pluralist a civilization as ours, it would not have been unreasonable to expect a greater degree of unity in Père de la Saudée's collection. There is too great a variation in the value of the contributions, and in the amount of technical knowledge they demand from their readers; nor is there enough editorial assistance—an index should surely be a minimal requirement for a work of this kind. Yet the high standard reached by many of the individual essays makes this an important book; three French editions have appeared since it was first published in 1950.

First in order, Professor Dondeyne's essay is too highly compressed to be easy reading (as the translator seems to have found) but amply repays the effort needed. He sees materialism as an attempt to extend the scientific method beyond the limits in which it is valid, to the exclusion of all other explanations. To this he opposes a metaphysics of the kind familiar to us from the work of M. Marcel; it is grounded on our experience of ourselves as beings open to a world other than ourselves, and on our realization that such being is to be comprehended only as a participation of unlimited Being. This is a metaphysics which reaches out to the religious affirmation of God by faith.

Dr Romaña tells us that nature, as revealed by the telescope, is wonderful, but in philosophizing about it he confuses the question whether or not the universe is created, with the different question whether or not it was created a finite time ago. The latter cannot be answered by unaided reason (St Thomas, *S.T.* I, 46, 2), and from a purely scientific point of view, there is as good evidence for the recent hypothesis of 'continuous creation', which requires a universe of infinite duration, as for the alternative hypothesis discussed by Dr Romaña. Professor Ruschkamp's 'Origin of Life' also suffers from lack of precision. Whether spontaneous generation is proved or disproved by science, there is no theological difficulty about admitting natural

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causes for the production of life from non-living matter, so long as these are understood to be under God's providence and not due to mere chance.

Professor Vanderbroek's 'Origin of Man' is a critical study of the most important hominoid remains. His standpoint is strictly scientific, and his scientific work is of the highest order. This witness to a disinterested love of truth (heritage above all of Catholics) will in the end have greater effect than something more directly apologetic in intention. It is fittingly complemented by the late Dr Messenger's account of the Church's official attitude to evolution, which he accompanies by an exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis.

Professor Ternus makes the fairly common mistake of trying to produce an essay by condensation, but his Aristotelian approach to the problem of the human soul is on the whole clear and helpful. Père de Lubac's 'Origin of Religion' is the distinguished piece of writing that was to be expected from him. He has hardly space to do more than dispose of certain false theories—such as that which finds the source of monotheism in social compulsion—but he does this very effectively. Perhaps it might have been made clear that such theories are now largely restricted to popularizers, always a generation behind the line of advance; modern field anthropologists are distrustful of generalization.

The group of four essays on the origins of Christianity will disappoint admirers of the fine work done by the French in the field of Scriptural studies. Is it because the information they give is eventually for Marxist consumption that they seem somewhat unimaginative, somewhat dated? As St Paul discovered at Athens, to state the Christian message in terms acceptable to rationalists does not always have good results.

Professor Duhr examines the theological causes leading to Luther's personal revolt against orthodoxy, and so refutes the view that the Lutheran revolution can be entirely accounted for by economics; M. du Passage catalogues the social benefits we owe to the Church. There follows an unusually interesting essay by Douglas Woodruff, who says that the social encyclicals were written against socialism as much as against capitalism, that the Church's wish for a wider diffusion of property presupposes its remaining private property, and that conservatism has nothing to do with capitalism, despite the common opinion.

The last two chapters are extremely good. Professor Wetter's discussion of the theory of dialectical materialism is based on a thorough knowledge of classical Marxist writing. His brief criticism, bringing out the inconsistencies of this philosophy, is all the more convincing because of the sympathetic and balanced account which has preceded

it. Père Congar in his discussion of the problem of evil distinguishes two levels of consideration. There is first of all an intellectual problem; and here Père Congar's answer that God 'when he created a sinful world willed at the same time the remedy for sin: he willed both things together', hard as it is, does face the issue squarely and not seek to evade it in abstractions. But in and through the problem can be seen the mystery of evil as it presents itself to man at grips with his destiny; a mystery which calls for reverence, whose meaning is only to be understood in the revelation of God's love.

Taken as a whole, then, this is a valuable collection of essays, and English Catholics should be grateful to Père de la Saudée and his translators. But even in rather better-fitting English clothes its spirit would remain obstinately continental; no doubt for Englishmen that will seem the source of its strength and its weaknesses alike. Whether they would be capable of a similar effort of collaboration remains to be seen; it would certainly be well worth trying.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY. By Kenneth Scott Latourette. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 63s.)

This massive volume is no mere summary of its author's seven-volume *History of the Expansion of Christianity*. These chapters 'endeavour to be a well-rounded summary of the entire history of Christianity in all its phases and in its setting in the human scene. In them expansion must have a place and at times be prominent. However, it is only one aspect of a larger whole.' The vastness of such an undertaking within the covers of one book is obvious; and impressive indeed are the skill and thoroughness with which Professor Latourette has organized the enormous mass of material, the cohesion of so kaleidoscopic a narrative, and the lucidity of the presentation. Flat patches there are, here and there a faint suggestion of a catalogue, moments when the summary seems too summary (Hesychasm, Jansenism, for example)—it could not be otherwise. But it remains a single unified book, not an encyclopaedia. Professor Latourette's objectivity is sustained, sometimes almost unnecessarily: a very occasional trace of unconscious bias is welcome, for it shows that the objectivity *is* objectivity, and not indifference.

To examine this work critically as history would require a committee; to present a report on its judgments and findings would require another. But it is refreshing to find Professor Latourette writing that 'for the first time Christianity is becoming really world-wide. It is entering into the lives of more people than it or any other religion has ever done. Into the new and often terrifying stage into which the human race, bewildered, is being ushered, Christianity is more potent