

REVIEWS

L'ÉGLISE ET LA QUESTION SOCIALE par R. G. Renard, O.P.
(Editions du Cerf; 15 frs.)

LE PAPE ET LE COMMUNISME par Mgr. Paul Richaud (*Lumière Ouvrière*). (Desclée de Brouwer; pp. 164, n.p.)

CREATIVE REVOLUTION. By J. F. T. Prince. (Coldwell; 6s. 6d.)

Father Renard complains justly of the academic dullness of most Catholic social literature: "Too often are our programmes presented—not with too much intelligence—but with intelligence that lacks fire." We wish it could be said that his own book was a striking exception; but his efforts at a bright conversational style and his periodical excursions into lyricism may seem to English taste too artificial to be altogether successful. The wrapper, though genteel and inoffensive, compares unfavourably in attractiveness with corresponding Communist products. But the matter is, on the whole, good. Particularly valuable and opportune is the opening treatment of the methodology of Christian sociology: here the encyclicals are put into their proper place among the *sources*, a place as important if less spectacular than that assigned them in some current Catholic revolutionary rhetoric. Good, too, are the critical chapters on *Individualism* and *Socialism* which follow. The more constructive chapter on *Work* is satisfactory if not exhaustive. Less satisfactory is the chapter on *Property*. The author's unsubstantiated (and insufficiently elaborated) assumption that "le fondement philosophique et théologique de la propriété n'est pas le travail, mais la disposition providentielle du monde" may be compared with the closely reasoned thesis of Fr. Horváth, O.P., that "die Wirkursache des Eigentumsrecht ist nach Thomas die Arbeit."¹ The safeguarding of legitimate property-rights acquired through heredity does not seem to us to involve (as Fr. Renard seems to suppose) the rejection of this fundamental principle, and the concept of property as "the extension of personality"—which Fr. Renard enthusiastically preaches—seems to us meaningless unless this principle be accepted and asserted. Moreover, to appeal to "providential disposition" is to shirk the real problem by transferring it into another plane of causality, besides blurring the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate *dominium* and encouraging a pseudo-pious acquiescence in any iniquitous economic *status quo*. The author's persistence in regarding work and property as two independent (instead of closely interdependent) "pivots" of Catholic social teaching colours his subsequent critique of capitalism. The distinction between capitalism and the abuse of capitalism (by the subordination of work to finance) is valid and necessary, but Fr. Renard overlooks the fact that

¹ *Eigentumsrecht nach dem hl. Thomas von Aquin*, (Moser, Graz, 1929.).

capitalism of its inherent nature and dynamism, and not merely owing to the wickedness of capitalists, leads necessarily to that abuse. The book concludes with a good statement of the Corporate Order suggested by the encyclicals.

Mgr. Richaud is Bishop of Irenopolis. His book is a commentary, with complete text, on the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*. Ingeniously, Marx, Engels and Lenin are called in to do most of the commenting. For Mgr. Richaud manifests a thorough acquaintance with the "Marxist Scriptures" and knows how to use them with effect. The result gives the lie to the assertion that Pius XI does not know what he is talking about when he speaks of Communism, and reveals the fact that the encyclical is a penetrating and just estimate of Communist theory and practice.

Of Fr. Prince's book it is difficult to write unextravagantly. Here, it is true, there is no attempt at a methodical exposition of Christian social teaching, but there is a rare sense of the *drama* of the Christian revolution, of its inner significance and implications, combined with a first-hand knowledge and shrewd understanding of Russian and non-Russian Communism. Moreover, Fr. Prince is a master of language, of the succinct, telling apothegm, of the brilliant, illuminating paradox. Even his trite generalisations—of which there are perhaps too many—succeed in carrying conviction. We could quote indefinitely, but we leave readers to possess this book for themselves. It is no substitute for the textbook, but it is the most inspiring introduction to the subject in English: it gives the necessary *apéritif* for more solid and less tasty meals as well as the needed spur to self-sacrificial *action*. Fr. Prince combines intelligence with fire.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

RELIGION IN SOCIAL ACTION. By Maurice B. Reckitt. (John Heritage: The Unicorn Press; 3s. 6d.)

The framework within which the personal and social life of man is lived properly concerns those who claim to know man's destiny. That framework is the object of social action. We Christians hold, with varying degrees of certainty, that the framework provided by the new ruling forces of contemporary life is a framework we cannot tolerate. We are "imprisoned in an essentially false—and therefore evil—situation" (p. 14). This situation is the fruit of the post-Christian secularist civilization. "Europe is, for the first time since Constantine, more or less consciously adjusting itself to a mood which is post-Christian, either in striving after an impossible attempt to live on spasmodic and waning impulses derived from a Faith to which it has no