

REVIEWS

THE SECRET OF HOLINESS. By Father James, O.F.M.CAP. (Mercier Press; 15s.)

The value of Father James's writing lies in his positive and open-handed approach to the question. Holiness is set up not as a code of behaviour or collection of rules of thumb, but as an ideal to be aimed at. And its achievement will turn a man into a man, and something more: not only the natural instincts but the supernatural ambitions can be realised. The treatment is at once humanist and God-centred. Despite a carefully reasoned start with an examination of the Gospel sources, this is no dry treatise of fundamentals. St Thomas is quoted, saying that a thing is perfect in so far as it returns to its source: and so we are to see human perfection as it is shown to us by our Lord and the saints who took him as their ideal. Although Father James is setting out a straightforward treatise on the mission of our Lord and the pattern of Redemption, his thought moves alertly enough to keep our interest by constantly linking up with what we might easily mistake for simplified matters. So the meaning of the Incarnation is illustrated by a passage discussing the character of our Lord. Christ was so truly man that he had a character in the same way that we find a character in the friend we know: his character is revealed in the Gospels and an examination of it will show us his divinity. This is no unnecessary consideration. 'Sometimes a sharp contrast is thrown between life considered as an art and life considered as a duty. The contrast is superficial.' In such ways the thought is kept alive, and we read of the interpenetration of the natural and supernatural (a very important thing that affects much of human behaviour) of the popularity of holiness and of the repentance that learns goodness out of past sins. In such ways Father James keeps us alert on a vital subject.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

WALLS ARE CRUMBLING. By John M. Oesterreicher. With an introduction by Jacques Maritain. (The Devin-Adair Co., N.Y.; \$5.)

'A true Jew is a Christian unborn', declares Fr Oesterreicher (p. 274). In *Walls are Crumbling* we meet seven Jewish seekers after truth, all of our age and times, who each in their individual ways found and drank from the Fount and Source of all truth, Jesus Christ. The profound learning and scholarship of the author have here bestowed a valuable contribution upon the world of Catholic thought in making known the works of these seven philosophers to English-speaking readers. This is a book which gives the lie to the old tag which attaches to the Jews the stigma

of a wholly materialistic bias. Here are six sons and one daughter of Israel who defended and propagated the vital principles of God and the supernatural; the dignity of the human person; the objective reality of truth and virtue; the fall and the redemption; Christ and his Church.

HENRI BERGSON, rising from a concept of God's creatorhood, through a careful study of religion and morality to a vision of man's union with God and with his fellow men as exemplified in the mystics, 'patients par rapport à Dieu; agents par rapport aux hommes' (p. 32), broke through into the domain of faith in his simple declaration that the Gospels were 'mon climat de vie' (p. 42) and the Church 'le prolongement de Christ' (p. 38). On the eve of the Jewish persecution, it was a sense of loyalty to his brethren which prevented him from being acclaimed a member of the new Israel. This will always remain a deep source of regret to Catholics. Of his moral adhesion to the Church of Christ Fr Oesterreicher leaves us in no doubt whatever. EDMUND HUSSERL, protagonist of the objectivity of truth and master of the phenomenological school, was strongly drawn to the Church in his declining years. Although on his deathbed he could joyfully exclaim: 'What a wonderful day, Good Friday! Yes, Christ has forgiven us everything!' (p. 96), it is a matter for conjecture whether or not he actually embraced the whole Christ in his last moments. The young lawyer ADOLPH REINACH, Husserl's co-worker, found his Redeemer in the trenches during World War I. A profound insight into the relations of man with man was followed later by a deeper vision of man's relations with God. From the law of Sinai he passed to the law of Christ. His Protestant baptism never made of him a Protestant, and during the few remaining months before his life was abruptly cut short he always regarded himself as moving towards Catholicism.

To MAX SCHELER, at least during his most productive years, Christ was 'the divine Redeemer; the Incarnation of God and of his loving will'; who is mystically present in the Church which is the trustee of salvation (pp. 188, 190); suffering and contrition lead men to God's mercy; man is 'an epiphany of God in the stream of life' (p. 163). His subsequent regrettable break with Catholic thought is described with a sympathetic delicacy, and, as always throughout the book, the author has the Thomist solution ready at hand to clarify or correct whatever stops short of reality. The approach to Christ of PAUL LANDSBERG was through medievalism under the sure guidance of Augustinianism and St Thomas. Later, contrasting Christian with Greek philosophy, Christianity with paganism, he obtained a deeper understanding of the true nature of the Church. His subsequent writings show him moving ever closer to her, but he was never to realise his intention of being conditionally baptised, for he died of ill-treatment in a Nazi concentration camp in 1944.

The human face, to MAX PICARD, is the image of God, bearing the marks of his likeness. In the human face, too, he sees reflected the countenance of the Son of man. The sacrament of marriage is a well-spring of hope since Christ himself has sanctified it by deigning to be born in 'the house of marriage'. Our chaotic world is a flight from God, man has become discontinuous, disjointed, and only through Christ can continuity be restored. The 'Our Father', some of Max Scheler's lectures, a glimpse of the vivifying power of the Cross, the life of St Teresa and her own unquenchable thirst for truth, all played their part in drawing EDITH STEIN to Christ. Having found him, she was content only when she had surrendered herself to him completely in the religious state. 'Not human activity will help us but the Passion of Christ. To partake in it is my desire.' (p. 347.) Truth, the meaning of being, the soul's union with God by the Cross, form the subject of her greatest works, in which the thought of St Thomas, St Teresa and St John of the Cross are clothed with a living idiom and interpreted according to the modern philosophical temper. Edith was dragged from her Carmelite cell and gassed in 1942.

Of old, God ordained a candlestick with seven lamps to be placed in the south side of the tabernacle to give light in the house of God. May he not have designed this new menorah of seven luminous minds to enlighten their Jewish brethren and to reveal to them the treasures of the new Tabernacle of God with men?

P.

VOCATION. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s. 6d.)

This volume has no author since it is a collection of papers read at a meeting of priests whose object was to discuss the subject of vocation. The papers have been translated very well indeed by Walter Mitchell. The publication of these papers, the foreword says, hopes to benefit priests, superiors and novice-masters. Hope is too humble a word. The publication of these papers for the English reader is a stroke of genius. They should be given to every person who has to deal with vocations. Every page is worth its weight in gold in spite of the fact that each page is priced at only a humble penny (very nearly). It is impossible to single out passages for special commendation or the review would be as long as the book itself. Let every superior and novice-master or mistress read these pages carefully and there will be fewer square pegs in round holes. One might almost say to all concerned in this publication, 'Never was so much owed by so many to so few'.

D.J.S.