

**BEYOND POLITICS.** By Christopher Dawson. (Sheed & Ward; 3s. 6d.)

It is astonishing that the most reputable of American Catholic weeklies has represented this book as a plea for totalitarianism. Dawson sees simply, and perhaps with greater penetration than any other writer, that the rise of totalitarianism is a fact of epoch-making significance in the history of mankind; a fact which, *mutatis mutandis*, is as operative in the democracies as in the authoritarian states. The phenomenon of totalitarianism is no merely political one regarding the determination of forms of government (it is not necessarily bound up with individual dictatorship): it is something which profoundly affects human life on every level of existence, and not least on that of culture and religion. Dawson shows reason to fear the imminence, if not the presence, of 'a "democratic" totalitarianism which might be no less narrow and tyrannical than either Communism or National Socialism,' involving 'a degeneration of our culture into a mechanised mass civilisation which is as hostile to personal freedom and to intellectual integrity as any form of dictatorship.'

Totalitarianism, whether in the form of the tyranny of the ideological Party-State, or in the capitalist democracies of 'a soulless force which is inspired purely by the motive of profit,' presents a challenge of perhaps unprecedented gravity to us both as Englishmen and as Christians. As Englishmen, because the English traditions of personal freedom are something very different from the tyrannical forms of Continental doctrinaire democracy begotten of the French Revolution. 'The English State in the past has been the classical example of that mixed constitution which was the political ideal of St. Thomas Aquinas . . . Although liberal individualism may be fossilized or extinct, the ideals behind it which gave it whatever spiritual value it possessed, the ideals of liberty and toleration, are by no means dead, even though they may seem threatened with extinction, and any attempt to achieve a social organization adapted to our national genius must hold these ideals in view . . . If the English tradition is to survive it is necessary to renounce all thought of a Common Front and to stand on our own ground. We need a definite organization which does not compete with that of the political parties, but which is strong enough and conscious enough to meet the competitive organisations of Communism and Fascism.'

Still more grave is the challenge of totalitarianism to the Christian Church. While this challenge is more evident and

acute 'in the dictator states with their militant mass consciousness and their ideological fanaticism,' in the capitalist democracies there is the same problem as to 'how it is possible to reconcile spiritual freedom and personal responsibility with the mechanised existence of a unit in the economic machine . . . . The essential problem is how to transform the mechanised dehumanised mass population of an industrialised State into a true community with a common ethos and a common faith.' The Christian is duly warned again a 'moral rearmament' misconception of the function of religion, against the temptations to alliances with the forces of Right or Left totalitarianism, against adopting a purely negative attitude to these movements, and above all against offering Christianity itself as a political utopia which can challenge them on their own ground. What he is to do is made by no means so clear—perhaps inevitably, but none the less regrettably. It would be a pity if he were to interpret Dawson's 'culture' in too narrow and academic a sense, or his summons 'beyond politics' as a summons to neglect politics. But though it provides us with little in the way of a definite policy, *Christianity and Politics*, the last chapter of the book, outlines the Christian view of history and catastrophe with a lucidity and deftness of touch that makes us wish that it could be issued in pamphlet form and scattered broadcast.

Such summary diagnosis of recent history as this book offers inevitably lays itself open to criticism on the grounds of over-sweeping generalisation. Marx's conception of economics as the determining factor of historical development is perhaps too readily dismissed as entirely out-of-date. But by those who can value generalisations as generalisations, the first-rate importance of Dawson's diagnosis will not be missed.

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#### PSYCHOLOGY

MORAL PROBLEMS OF MENTAL DEFECT. By J. S. Cammack, S.J. (Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

The nature of these problems and the questions they raise are well illustrated by the case of the boy 'Tarzan' to whom the reader is introduced in the opening chapter of Fr. Cammack's informative study. 'Tarzan' is a mental defective who by reason of his incorrigibly bad conduct and criminal propensities was reported 'as being a Moral Defective of the most dangerous type; and one who does not appear to recognise the existence of any moral principles.' It was found necessary to send him to a State Institution,