

Book Reviews

OWEN CHADWICK, *The secularization of the European mind in the nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. [iii], 286, £6.50.

Professor Chadwick bases this book on his Gifford Lectures for 1973 to 1974, taking as his central theme the problem of the declining hold of the church on late nineteenth-century Europe. The reasons for this recession are multiple, as is obvious, and they include the new technology, German materialism, a cheap press, the organization of the working man, together with the impact of Marx, evolutionary science, scientific history and politics. "Secularization" is the term selected by the author to describe this phenomenon, and it denotes "a process, a fundamental change in attitudes and ways of life".

As is to be expected, this is a brilliant work of scholarship, which deals lucidly with an enormous and complex topic; it represents intellectual history at its best, with ideas and suggestions leaping from almost every page. The author traces the many strands which make up the pattern, one of them being the outstanding polemic of science versus religion (pp. 161–188), and the revolution incited by Darwin. This technique renders the book episodic in nature, but this is inevitable and does not detract from its overall worth.

For the historian of science and of medicine of the nineteenth century Professor Chadwick's book will be essential reading, for it helps to provide the "external" background to the "internal" minutiae of his research if he is studying technical advances. For the student of the social aspects of Victorian science or medicine a close acquaintance with this book will be even more mandatory.

NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS, *Society and culture in early modern France*, London, Duckworth, 1975, 8vo, pp. xviii, 362, illus., £9.80.

These eight essays were first published in 1965 by the author, who is Professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley. They explore the competing claims of innovation and tradition amongst the mostly illiterate peasants and artisans of sixteenth-century France, in a series of case studies linked historically. A great deal of literature and source material providing data on them has been surveyed, and they first deal with the social, vocational and sexual context of the Reformation, in so doing revealing the consequences for urban women and the new attitudes to poverty which, for example, were common in Catholic or Protestant in Lyons. Other essays consider the political and social uses made by festive occasions, and analyse the meaning of symbols in cultural play, the festive reversal of sex roles, and the ritualistic and dramatic structure of religious riots. The last two discuss the interaction between literate and oral culture, the impact of printing on the lower orders. This leads to a survey of the collecting of proverbs and medical folklore: 'Proverbial wisdom and popular error'. The second of these, and other parts of this scholarly work, will be of interest to the historian of medicine, because of useful information and interpretations, but also as part of the general background for any study of sixteenth-century French medicine. The text is copiously documented (pp. 271–346), which will lead the reader to the inevitably diffuse literary sources for the topics discussed. Professor Davis's book can be highly praised and recommended, a reaction already manifest by the need for a fourth reprint.