

BLACKFRIARS

it is the act whereby the priest in the Name and through the Power of God actually forgives us our sins. "Whose sins *you* shall forgive . . ." "I absolve thee from thy sins . . ."

These are incidental blemishes in an otherwise admirable little work, in which a difficult subject is treated with considerable insight, sympathy and discretion.

ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE, O.P.

SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICS

THE NECESSITY OF FREEDOM: NOTES ON CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS. By Douglas Jerrold. (Sheed & Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Christian civilization faces its crisis; its enemies stand menacingly at the gates; if it is not to be destroyed it must marshal its forces and attack, for "we must conquer or be conquered": Mr. Jerrold here gives a detailed statement of a familiar interpretation of this thesis. There is much that is true, and needs saying. There is a good deal that one cannot help thinking ill-considered, such as the remark that "man's claim to freedom rests, not on his intelligence, as fools believe . . ." (St. Thomas was one of the fools); or the cavalier treatment of Mr. Aldous Huxley, which would have been impossible if *Ends and Means* had been studied; or the definition of the new Italy in terms of a "long-deferred and sadly-needed flowering of the Puritan spirit in the Catholic South." Further, there is too often a tendency to allow reiterated assertion to take the place of reasoned argument.

What is more important, because it affects the essence of the thesis, is its *simplisme*: the frequent occurrence of such phrases as "the reason (or cause, or truth, or what not) is, of course, simple," on the one hand, and "folly," on the other, is revealing, for if things are indeed so simple we are lamentably foolish if we cannot recognize the so luminous truth. This *simplisme* is apparent on almost every page: the League Covenant is disposed of without difficulty, and without consideration of the principles of natural and Christian law which, however imperfectly, it embodies (Benedict XV, D'Azeglio, are not mentioned); Russia ought unhesitatingly to have been excluded anyway; China is no more than an "imitation of European Socialism"; the Spain of Franco will resemble Portugal or Italy rather than Germany, since the former are its allies; it is admitted, in answer to an imaginary objicient, that "a perfectly Christian social order has never existed," but not that the present confusion of elements in Western culture makes the concept of defending Christian civili-

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zation a somewhat nebulous one—on the contrary, the Christian civilization “has imposed itself on almost the whole world”; and “if war is wrong, it must be because it is wrong to interfere in any way in other people’s affairs. The evidence for this conclusion is to be found in elementary logic”—what fools we have been to bother our hearts over the question; and Spain too: “a war waged by Christians against a tyrannical atheism is not a civil war, and it is not merely not unnatural but actually necessary, when the attack on Christianity takes the form of armed aggression.”

“To love,” says Mr. Jerrold, “is also to hate.” Indisputably; but St. Augustine warned us: “let love of the sinner be always united to hatred of the sin”; and it is not easy to obey the warning; how seldom in fact one finds hatred of the bourgeois spirit which is not also hatred of the bourgeois, or of communism but not of communists, of fascism not of fascists. It is so easy to think of the fight against atheism in terms of St. George and the Dragon; but if we are to marshal the Christian states (even supposing that there are any) in a valiant crusade against the Dragon let us at least remember that in point of fact the Dragon is a number of millions of men, not an abstraction; and that Christ came to save not a chosen few but the race of men; and that His Mystical Body is greater than the ranks of nominal Catholics; and that the Christian mission is not to destroy the heathen but to bring the heathen to Christ. There is an abyss of difference between this present book and, let us say, Maritain’s profound preface to *Aux Origines d’une Tragedie*; and, in the last resort, it is this line of thought which makes the difference. It is easy to fix on one aspect of a question to the exclusion of the rest, or to assume that what is anti-black must be pure white; and it is comfortable, for it saves much effort of thought; but whether it is a policy which leads to the truth is another matter. For sincere Christians, Mr. Jerrold observes, “to be anti-capitalist without being Communist or Fascist is . . . the only possibility”; one cannot help wondering whether the attitude of mind, and the methods of inquiry and of argument, here adopted are likely to lead to the discovery, and, if discovered, to a satisfactory presentation, of the Christian alternative.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF MARXISM. By Waldemar Gurian.
(Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

“The Popular Front and the Soviet Union notwithstanding,” says Dr. Gurian in his preface, “Marxism is no longer a power that seems destined to shape the course of future history.” He