

REVIEWS

One's impression of the high degree of religious practice in America is confirmed by the figure of 70 per cent of Detroit Catholics who attend Mass at least on Sundays. (Among Jews there has been a serious weakening of religious attendance, with a figure of twelve per cent present for weekly worship at synagogue). About a third of white Protestants go to church each Sunday, and fifty per cent of negro Protestants are estimated to do so. Catholics express much the most consistent degree of religious belief: Protestants tend to be much more organization-minded: forty-seven per cent of the Catholic clergy are Irish, though only fourteen per cent of the laity have Irish origins—the book is full of fascinating details which give vitality to the picture it draws of the religious communities of Detroit. And its conclusions are of great importance in analysing the conflicts, especially those of race relations, which the complexity of American society has created. It is easy to generalize, to complain that progress in establishing tolerance and social justice is so slow. Professor Lenski's book points to the likely effects of the increase of Catholicism at the expense of white Protestantism, and the tendencies he has discerned should strengthen the Catholic opinion that seeks to use its strength to unite and not to divide the American society.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

RELIGION AND ECONOMIC ACTION, by Kurt Samuelsson; Heinemann; 21s.

This book is an iconoclastic tour de force. In the space of one hundred and fifty pages Dr Samuelsson surveys the whole field of the Weberian and related hypotheses and finds them utterly wanting. Inevitably in a work so comprehensive and condensed scholars will find fault with specific points. It seems difficult, however, to believe that when the dust has settled from this encounter, Weber's theory will retain even the semblance of an accepted doctrine.

The essence of Weber's thesis was that Capitalism was the child of the Protestant spirit. The particular features of Puritanism which Weber believed were loaded with economic significance, were the concept of 'The Calling' and the emphasis on asceticism which in economic terms was synonymous with thrift. These relatively abstract considerations were apparently supported by some statistical work of Offenbacher's, which was taken to prove that in certain German states of mixed religion, Protestant children were more in evidence at the Realgymnasium where it was thought that an education particularly suitable to businessmen was given.

Dr Samuelsson proceeds to give an account of the elaborations and detractions of this theory which in itself will make this book indispensable to undergraduate essayists. The work of past critics of Weber, such as Brentano and Robertson, is found inadequate because in the last resort they all aver that the theory contains an element of truth, microscopic though it may be. Dr Samuelsson takes a different view. He maintains that when the whole corpus of anti-Weberian criticism is assembled, it becomes clear that however subtly modified

the thesis is untenable.

The evidence is then reviewed. Examples of non-puritan capitalistic practice and theory are paraded for our inspection. It is shown that the puritan fathers, far from encouraging acquisitiveness and worldly success, hedged all commercial activity with many qualifications and warnings and that American businessmen who engaged in anterior philosophical reflection on their success were largely deluding themselves. Although Dr Samuelsson's treatment of Richard Baxter is rather unsatisfactory and J. D. Rockefeller is most unreasonably maligned, this evidence is otherwise impressive.

One of the most useful chapters in the book is that devoted to illustrating how tenuous the historical connection between Protestantism and economic progress really was. Dr Samuelsson shows that time and again where Protestantism and progress were concurrent there is no proof of causality and that indeed alternative 'natural' explanations are available. On the other hand he points out that Catholic Belgium was second only to England in producing a spectacular industrial revolution.

Although we are told on page two that Weber's starting point was Offenbacher's statistical work on education in German states of mixed faith, Dr Samuelsson reserves his analysis of these findings for his last chapter, where it makes a very fine, if somewhat theatrical, *coup de grace*. For not only is it shown that Weber uncritically accepted Offenbacher's tables, which in one instance contained an important arithmetical error which strengthened his case, but Dr Samuelsson also points out that the apparently disproportionate number of Protestants in the Realgymnasium can be explained by the fact that the Realgymnasiums tended to be situated in areas, usually towns, where Protestants were concentrated. Within these areas the proportion of Protestant children attending the Realgymnasium was almost exactly equal to the proportion of Protestants in the total population. Any number of accidental reasons could be adduced to explain why some German Protestants in these states tended to live in towns.

It may well be that historians will continue to juggle with the nebulous concepts of Protestantism and capitalism till the world's end. From the statistician's point of view Weber's theory stands revealed as an image with feet of clay.

CHRISTOPHER HOWE

MAN AND METAPHYSICS, by Régis Jolivet; translated by B. M. G. Reardon; Burns and Oates (Faith and Fact Series); 8s. 6d.

It cannot be said that this book has much relevance to the English philosophical scene. On the first page of the first chapter the science of being is described as 'the science of the *unknowable*', and although the statement is immediately qualified ('so far at least as its object, as we shall see, is not *an object*') a positivistic analyst is likely to shut the book at this point. On the next page we are