

plane of Supernatural thinking and Supernatural action—Theology and Sanctity.

Each essay in this volume illustrates or applies, in one way or another, these general principles. It is impossible, in the compass of a review, to analyze the richness and diversity of thought which this little book contains. It follows up and develops, in more didactic fashion, the path pointed out by Mgr. Besson's *Après quatre cents ans* to which it is a worthy successor. It is earnestly to be hoped that an enterprising publisher will make it available to the English-reading public.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

LA PENSEE DE MACHIAVEL EN FRANCE. By Albert Cherel. (Paris: L'Artisan du Livre.)

This is a very weighty study of the place Machiavelli occupies in French thought, by a professor of Bordeaux University, who has made Fénelon the theme of his life work. Here, too, the seventeenth century absorbs his main interest and its treatment fills half the volume: 70 pages cover the preceding and 100 the succeeding periods, the latter being taken down to the "Fascist" riots of February 6 of last year.

The author's thesis is that French kingship has always been traditionally opposed to all Machiavellism, and that in French popular and literary thought it is based on justice, kindness and all the Christian virtues. The French have always wanted their king's *débonnaire* like Henri IV and the traditional ideal of a French king was a saint, Louis IX. A seventeenth century writer (L. Melliet) went so far as to advise the princes to give up such ferocious sport as the chase, and instead to go in for angling! The passage is all the more striking since angling is indeed the national passion of France, every normal Frenchman being obsessed by the desire to spend all his leisure time by the banks of some placid watercourse, watching a rod and waiting for a bite: and could anything better illustrate the innate peaceableness of the French?

But Louis XIV, *le roi-soleil*, of whom we would think rather than of Louis IX as truly representing French monarchy? Ah, but Louis XIV was exactly the exception who proves the rule: he had been completely spoiled by the Italian knavery of a Mazarin, whom Fénelon thus apostrophizes: "You have done far greater harm to the French than that of spilling their blood; you have corrupted the fount of their morals; you have turned our Gallic honesty into ridicule. . . ." Fénelon (aided by Mme. de Maintenon!) had no dearer wish than that of "converting" the king, whom he did not hesitate thus to address: "Do you think that you can satisfy God by gilding the interior of a chapel, by saying a chapelet, by listening to some sacred music and

by expelling a Jansenist or two?" Fénelon's famous book, *Télémaque*, was written with a purpose, as a protest against the "Great King's absolutism: it was meant for the education of Louis XV and in fact was looked upon as a manual for kings in general. Like a previous writer—Fr. Senault—he meant to substitute for those maxims of the dreadful Florentine who, alas, had found in the king so eager a disciple—for those maxims "which would make the princes absolute and the people miserable, he would have the king adopt those Christian precepts which would make kings just and their kingdoms happy."

The tragedy is not that Louis XIV's son and successor did not heed such excellent advice: for he did indeed most earnestly strive after self-discipline and, faithful to *Télémaque's* and his own *Mentor*, concentrated on the acquisition of virtues and the reform of his own life. The tragedy is that the educators of Louis XV never realized that for the ruler of a nation this does not suffice and that a king must equally be taught to reform his kingdom. Individual virtues are no substitute for professional knowledge: the two must go hand in hand. It is curious that so obvious a fact could have been overlooked.

The results were most tragic. The corruption and ineptitude of the reigns following that of Louis XIV seemed to prove the truth of Machiavelli's thesis that Christian humility and readiness to offer the other cheek rendered all government impossible. Napoleon referred contemptuously to *Télémaque* as "those rhapsodies of Fénelon," which by his time had become completely discredited. But even then, anti-Christian French thought did not adopt Machiavelli's immoralism. Perhaps the French are too commonsense to fall a prey to such nonsense: they know full well, as did Aristotle, that even in the association of malefactors justice is needed; they are too shrewd not to see that Machiavelli's Borgias failed miserably and that "bad faith leads ever to a bad end."

They thought Christian morality useless for political purposes: instead of throwing all morality overboard, they looked for another morality elsewhere and thought they had found it in the stoicism and civil virtues of Pagan Rome. Montesquieu already, against Machiavelli, felt too proud to lie, even for his country; d'Holbach had postulated an Ethocracy; Robespierre and Saint-Just could never conceive "how a stranger to all morality could ever defend Liberty." Rousseau held up Machiavelli's "Prince" as the truthful account of what kingship meant and hailed it as the best apologia for Republicanism. For the latter he demanded the mysticism of a "grand passion": and against Christianity he maintained that "those, whose only passion was the salvation of their own souls, would never achieve anything great in the temporal sphere."

As will be seen, this literary and historical study of a specialist is of great general interest—if only to make us appreciate more thankfully those great Popes from Leo XIII to Pius XI, whose directives have created a specifically Catholic modern science of politics; and to make us ever more deeply realize that our Faith, and our Faith alone, can save not only our soul, but also our country.

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS.

DIE FLUCHT VOR GOTT. By Max Picard.

This is a difficult book; yet it would be a pity if those to whom it could be of great help were to be deterred from reading it. For it treats of so many important matters and has a great mission to fulfil. *Flucht vor Gott* is written in symbolic language and is a study of the irreligiousness of our time in all its individual and collective manifestations. It is, as it were, an examination of conscience, or rather it brings into relief the needs, emptiness and loneliness of the modern man. At the same time it helps to overcome them by discovering their one, common rest.

Picard finds that the factor which dominates the spiritual outlook of the modern world is the deliberate flight from God. Man's objective faith has been destroyed; he only wants to be independent and rely on himself alone. But this denial of God causes something which those who desire to be their own end will never replace: everything is tottering; nothing remains in its place; all concepts (notions), values, standards are shifted, distorted or emptied; everything is caught in a maddening and self-destructive whirl. If we could bring these thoughts to their logical conclusion, the result would resemble the physical universe which has lost its centre of gravity. But what is impossible with regard to the physical universe, man has tried to bring about in the spiritual and ethical order: the result is a world without centre of gravity, flung about in the void in which everything is thrown into disorder. Those who are caught in it cannot even know what is taking place, and only those that have received the grace to remain outside can investigate and realize what is really happening. This is one part of the book. The other part explains the order of things which will ever remain and which, by reason of its simplicity, is accessible to any one. This order remains whether man acknowledges it or not, whether he adjusts himself to it or not.

In this book speaks one who is a believer in the full sense of the word and who reminds the age, which will perhaps not hear him, that the hierarchy of values remains as it is, even if man, as so often happens nowadays, subordinates everything to a false value; that now as for all times God is the eternal and unchange-