

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

It is with great regret that I see 'Commentary' in your September 1962 issue opened with the entirely erroneous statement that 'before the war 38 per cent of the world's population did not have enough to eat; today nearly 60 per cent go hungry'—more especially as Fr McCormack gives the correct information two pages later. Statistical statements should always be checked back to their source and not accepted on hearsay; and the publication of false information is bound to do harm.

Yours faithfully,

COLIN CLARK

Reviews

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND. The *Rambler* and its Contributors 1848-1864, by Josef Altholz; Burns and Oates; 30s.

The controversies provoked by Richard Simpson and the young Acton, and the ambiguous connexion of Newman with them are central in the intellectual history of English Catholicism in the years after the Oxford conversions. They had much to do with exacerbating the already difficult relations between the converts and the old Catholics and between the Italianizers and the others among the converts. Simpson and Acton were very provoking, bishops were very obtuse, Rome only half understood and was excessively irritated, there was never any really straightforward confrontation of the *Rambler* group with its critics: it was all an unsatisfactory, tangled, obscure and half-cock affair. It seemed that in the end it would lead to an explosion, with the apparent triumph of Manning and his party in 1870. But the ending was sadly farcical, with Acton, still within the Church and having received no formal ecclesiastical censure, chiding the aged and excommunicated Döllinger for his refusal to make absolute moral judgments on historical personages.

From the standpoint of today the whole thing looks like a storm in a tea-cup. It would be hard today to find even conservative ecclesiastics who would come close to making the Temporal Power a remote corollary of dogmatic faith or who would think it proper for a historian to pass silently over the more scabrous episodes of ecclesiastical history. But in one way the problem raised by the *Rambler* is still with us. The real fault of the writers in the *Rambler* was not so

much that they were candid historians who disliked pious fibbing or liberal politicians who thought the Temporal Power an anachronism, but that they were *laymen* who talked at large upon topics that traditionally were canvassed only by clerics. When ecclesiastical opinion was scandalized by Newman's 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine', it was on account of its supposed connexion with and covert justification of the turbulent laymen of the *Rambler*. Ullathorne certainly, and Manning possibly, would not if pressed have wanted, with Talbot, to have restricted the laity to hunting, shooting and entertaining; but the spectacle of laymen examining, say, Catholic educational policy and coming to their own conclusions was more than they could bear. Of course, they were inconsistent in this; for those laymen, such as W. G. Ward and Louis Veillot, who thrust themselves most crassly into the knottiest theological problems, were commended for their virtue as good party men.

Dr Altholtz has given us a clear and authoritative treatment of the movement associated with the *Rambler* and of the controversies it provoked. It is good that he should have rescued this episode from the oblivion that might, for all but specialists, have overtaken it. He writes of Acton, Simpson and their circle: 'Too liberal to submit, too Catholic to secede, the Liberal Catholics rested their hopes in a posterity which has by and large ignored them'. This is not unjust. If we all now take for granted what seemed so doubtfully consistent with Catholicism a hundred years ago, this is not a direct consequence of the work of these Victorian worthies. All the same, the fundamental problem of the place of the layman in the thinking and teaching Church is still unsolved. It is worth noting that while the Protestant churches will send laymen as well as clerics to ecumenical discussions, this is as yet almost inconceivable on the Catholic side. We may well believe it will not always be so; but we have still some distance to go.

J. M. CAMERON

PLOTINUS, THE ENNEADS, translated by Stephen Mackenna. Third Edition revised by B. S. Page with a foreword by Professor E. R. Dodds and an introduction by Professor Paul Henry, S.J.; Faber and Faber; 70s.

Mackenna's translation of the *Enneads* first appeared between 1917 and 1930. The second edition, revised by B. S. Page, appeared in 1956, and the growing number of readers of Plotinus will be delighted that the third edition, with a greatly enlarged introduction, is now available.

In his revision of the text B. S. Page has been extremely cautious in his treatment of Mackenna's original, and the differences between this edition and the second are small. In his preface Mr Page says that he could have made more alterations—in the light of recent scholarship on Plotinus—had he not 'been anxious to adhere to the principles stated (in the preface to the second edition) and retain Mackenna's words so far as was at all possible'.

So the reviewer is faced with what is basically the original Mackenna version