

of man. Dr Raju argues convincingly for the idea of Spirit as something transcending man, which has the power to unite all men in ultimate 'inwardness' which is the goal of evolution. But the Spirit is never conceived in a fully personal manner and man's union with God is therefore never properly conceived as a personal union. Yet it must be said that his attempted synthesis of the different points of view is profoundly suggestive. One can only wish that there were more theologians prepared to make a study of Chinese and Indian thought and to integrate these conceptions with the Christian view of man.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

MONTESQUIEU, by Werner Stark; International Library of Sociology and Reconstruction; Routledge and Kegan Paul; 25s.

Although Dr Stark's book professes a rather limited and technical aim—the discussion of Montesquieu as a pioneer of the sociology of knowledge—no better book for the general reader has ever appeared on Montesquieu. It is a pity it had to come out in this particular series, since even the informed reader who may have suffered from the clotted language of some sociologists might decide to pass the book by. Let it be said at once that their fears are largely unfounded. Dr Stark can, and usually does, write in a lucid, sensitive and immediately-intelligible style. Where he uses technical terms they are often his own, and he explains them; even occasional paragraphs of 'sociologese' are not insurmountable, and, as they occur mainly in the second half of the book, by that time the reader will be so absorbed in the personality of Montesquieu, as developed by Dr Stark, that he will not allow them to stand in his way. All the same, slight as they are, they are a pity; for Dr Stark himself is deeply rooted in the humane European tradition to which Montesquieu belonged—but the latter had the advantage of living in an age before technical jargon began to ruin prose.

Dr Stark has also followed Mill's injunction to put himself in a posture of sympathy with his author: not that this was really necessary, for an alternative sub-title for the book might well have been 'A man to like and admire.' Yet he is not bemused by Montesquieu: he tells us candidly when he shuts his eyes, when he gets carried away by rhetoric (like Erasmus), and when he is dabbling in theories. It seems astonishing that this wise and sympathetic character should have been dismissed so curtly in the text-books as a cranky Frenchman who (mistakenly) believed English government to be based on the separation of powers and that geography and climate governed morality and politics. Even a casual reading of the *Esprit des Lois* disabuses one of the first and makes one highly dubious about the second. Dr Stark shows us a man maturing visibly under the influence of experience, travel, and interested detachment. Our first reflection must be what a mistake it is to read only one work, even if the greatest, when we wish to understand a man's thought; our second, that even when young he could observe that he did not see why the manners and customs of one country should be preferred to those of another (if not contrary to morality). How wise

and sane he is, too, in his most casual remarks! 'Good education consists in putting our ideas into proportion.' 'If people just wanted to be happy, that would be easily done. But they want to be happier than others, and that is almost always difficult because we take the others for happier than they are.' 'The different professions may affect our minds a good deal. For instance, a man who teaches may easily become opinionated, because he plays the part of a man who is never wrong.' With some figures in the history of thought, for instance Rousseau and Bentham, we feel that their ideas are being constricted by their personalities. Not so with Montesquieu; he has *stature*. We watch him (in Dr Stark's pages) trying to arrive at a single-factor explanation of different types of state and society, but his mind is too rich, his intelligence too much for him. This has made him difficult for the impatient reader to appraise: he experiments with explanations, re-grades them, inter-weaves, discards. Dr Stark makes it quite clear that his judgment comes down, finally, on the *constitution* (and not the form only, but the spirit) as the determining factor, though he never neglects the contributory or counteracting effects of others. Man, he believes fundamentally, should assert his independence of climate, etc. 'Bad legislators are those who have supported the vices of the climate, and the good those who have opposed them.' And in his *Réponses et Explications* to the theologians who had accused him of determinism, Montesquieu stated categorically: 'It can be said that the book of the Spirit of the Laws presents a perpetual triumph of morality over climate, or, rather, over the physical causes in general.'

Montesquieu emerges as a man who should be essential to our book-shelves and to our syllabuses. In the history of ideas he is a great missing link—and a very early one—in the humane, historical tradition of Burke, Coleridge, and the saner German romantics. He is another nail in the coffin of the atomic individualism which we used to be taught was the mainstream of modern political thought. He has the most sensible approach of anyone to the state of nature, which was a subject of debate for two hundred years: pre-social man is poised between contradictory possibilities, social, anti-social. Yet in practice the former is always chosen; war only occurs when men are already associated. He has the same respect for persons and foibles as Hegel, and more than Burke, and is as deeply conscious of the importance of society as Coleridge. Like Coleridge, too, he believes that the trading mentality, which makes for honesty and legality, kills some of the kinder virtues. He does not believe in any coincidence between private selfishness and public good, though he allows that one vice will sometimes inhibit another: laws of all kinds are made to keep men straight, and a sustained moral effort is required. For Montesquieu is essentially a moralist, and a strong believer in original sin—a great armour against eighteenth-century rationalism. Almost nothing in this book throws more light on his mind than Dr Stark's footnote-observation that as a man improves morally his estimate of human nature will become lower (and vice versa). Again, while Montesquieu is on the surface a cosmopolitan in the eighteenth-century manner, he goes much deeper. In *Lettres Persanes* he writes: 'The heart is a citizen of all lands. In what-

ever country I have been, I have lived there as if I had to pass all my life there . . . I am a man by necessity and a Frenchman only by accident,' and Dr Stark rightly says that his basic unifying principle is that all human beings are bound together. This likeness to the sixteenth-century Spaniard, Vitoria, leads one to notice what Dr Stark is not here particularly concerned to point out; how deeply, despite his religious and political relativism, Montesquieu is rooted in Catholic thought. In the interesting final chapter where Dr Stark succeeds in reconciling this genuine relativism based on observation with Montesquieu's equally fundamental belief in eternal values, much of what he says follows, in greater detail, scholastic discussions on the universality, yet relativity in individual cases, of the natural law. It is therefore rather unfortunate that Dr Stark refers in the same chapter to Montesquieu's general remoteness from the 'natural law philosophy' of his time, without saying that he is in fact in an older and sounder natural-law tradition, before the rationalists attempted to give it scientific exactitude.

Finally, Montesquieu is, like all the greatest thinkers, in many ways far ahead of his time. He sees how the understanding of politics is sacrificed to the study of natural sciences; he arrives under his own power at the modern sociological concept of a *culture*, of which you cannot disturb one element without incalculably changing the rest; he sees, as we are now only beginning to realise, that things are not really what they seem from a purely formal point of view, especially in the case of political institutions; and in a period when the writing of history was in its infancy, he believed that all institutions and customs must have a reasonable explanation, and went to fantastic lengths to try and understand the most obscure and repellant—a lesson many historians could well learn to-day.

Whether Dr Stark has 'proved' Montesquieu to be a pioneer of the sociology of knowledge hardly seems to matter. This excellent book could have been written without that aim, and should reach a wider public. For it delves not only into the pre-history of sociology, but into the interesting border country between politics, sociology and history. Moreover, we become familiar with the workings of a great mind, and that is perhaps the most important and educating thing of all.

BERNICE HAMILTON

THE CHURCH AND ECONOMICS, by Christopher Hollis (A Faith and Fact Book; Burns and Oates, London; 8s. 6d.).

This is a useful book, and written in such a way that it should succeed in holding the interest of the ordinary reader who might normally be frightened by a book on economics. The approach adopted by Mr Hollis succeeds in doing two things. First, it gives the reader an insight into the way in which the social doctrine of the Church has developed, and secondly, it will convince him that there cannot be a single Catholic solution to each problem. All that the Church can do is to define what is and what is not in conformity with the moral law, so that