

For the medievalist the least satisfying sections of the book are perhaps those dealing with monasticism—a subject on which Mr McNeile is not only disappointingly jejune but at times positively inaccurate.

H. M. CHEW

A WILTSHIRE HOME: A Study of Little Durnford. By Dorothy Devenish. (Batsford; 12s. 6d.)

This is a type of book which, when well done and authentic, is not only extremely pleasant to read but valuable as a record of an English way of life that has almost ceased to exist. That thing so oddly named 'Progress' has destroyed it. Factory farming and the monoculture which produces 'dust-bowls' are rapidly taking the place of the old integrated rural life where the squire and the ploughman realised their dependence on each other. There were abuses and tyrannies, but nothing to equal the inhuman tyranny of the machine.

Miss Devenish's study of life in Little Durnford in her childhood gives a rich and balanced picture, filled with loving detail, of what such a country life could be under good conditions. There is no squalor or poverty here, but a real feudal friendliness, very incredible to the Communist mind. It is simply family life on a large scale, in which a cow-man, cook, butler, and dairymaid had as certain a place as the squire and his lady. It produced people who were individuals, not cut to a pattern, though they were stamped by their occupation, and proud of it. In this book we hear of the Keeper who announced the birth of twin boys to his employer by saying 'Two new under-keepers have arrived'.

In the old days Wiltshire shared with Sussex the child-like custom which buried the shepherd with a lock of sheep's wool on his breast, so that St Peter would know why his attendance at church had been irregular. This is a custom which must go back to days before the Reformation.

ESTHER MEYNELL

RICH AND POOR IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION. By Walter Shewring. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

The slick exegesis which enlarges the needle's eye to admit an undersized and not-too-tightly squeezed camel is without foundation in authentic Christian teaching. The Gospels, Tradition, Theology and Papal Documents, all emphasise the obstacle to salvation which riches present: to overcome it requires a grace so extraordinary and so rare as to be comparable to this apparently futile and still technically impossible operation. Mr Shewring presents the traditional teaching in a graceful and distinguished translation, preceded by a brief but full introduction, itself firmly based on yet wider reading and long reflection.

It is true that the mere possession of riches, the resources of the earth which were meant to be at the disposal of man, is not sinful. But in the presence of riches it is so difficult to be detached, and

it is attachment to wealth that renders salvation impossible. Even great saints have found it necessary to strip themselves of material possessions in order to gain true spiritual detachment. The rich therefore can no more appeal to Abraham, who combined riches with virtue, than could the Jews when challenged by John the Baptist: 'Had Abraham been in the place of the rich young man, he would cheerfully have resigned his wealth, not gone away sorrowing'.

All these writers are agreed in principle, but they display a most exciting diversity of approach. Pope St Gregory shows from the parable of Lazarus that the New Law is in this respect more severe than the Old. A thousand years later Massillon takes up the same text and draws attention to the limited nature of the crimes of which the rich man is charged: there is no evidence that he gained his wealth unjustly, his clothes of purple and fine linen probably did not surpass conventional luxury, his sumptuous feasting need not have been to excess or contrary to the Law, but he was 'one whose greatest vice was to have no virtue'. Here is Peter Damian using very strong language for a saint, perhaps even rather strong for the not over-refined congregations of the eleventh century, when upbraiding the covetous and bribe-takers. Vitoria is more subtle, more exact in his terminology and aware of the necessary distinctions, but he is quite definite and even brusque in his aside to the wealthy clergy: 'They have no heirs to leave to, and if they fail to give generous alms they cannot escape guilt. I know well enough they will not believe this, but the truth is that all such are damned, and it is better that they should be.'

For the present day the Popes are clear enough, but neither preachers nor theologians seem to be stimulated in the complexities of modern life to such forthright declarations as their predecessors. Where do we stand under a government bent on providing its own brand of social security? what are we to do about functionless property? how can we overcome the vast and scandalous differences of fortune persisting, if not so much at home, still in the world as a whole? In the absence of further authoritative guidance, we may learn from these attractive translations how little we need fear to err when it is on the side of generosity. EDWARD QUINN

THE MEANING OF MAN. By Jean Mouroux. Translated by A. H. C. Downes. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

This is the first book to be published by Canon Mouroux. Perhaps that it why it is so splendid and rich. Other authors have made notable and repeated contributions to the study of theology in our time: their output has been prolific but their quality has remained distinguished. Constant practice, too, has sharpened and clarified their literary style. But there is another way of achieving fullness of content, outstanding quality and clarity of expression: the way of constant examination of the sources of revelation, the study of