

REVIEWS

'those who wage war justly aim at Peace, and so they are not opposed to Peace, except to the evil peace which Our Lord came not to send upon the earth.'

We recommend this volume to the serious consideration of all thinking Christians who have the peace of Europe at heart.

HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

THE COMMUNIST ANSWER TO THE WORLD'S NEEDS. By Julius F. Hecker, Ph.D. (Chapman & Hall; 8/6.)

Dr. Hecker's book, though less convincing than its predecessor, *Moscow Dialogues*, is not so silly as certain reviewers have made it out to be. The points of view which the author attempts to reproduce are voiced by sufficiently real types, an Anglican Canon of Modernist persuasion, an Economist of the liberal school, a Quaker, a Douglasite, a Labour M.P. (Non-conformist), an American, a rabid Social Revolutionary and a bloodthirsty Nationalist—and are answered by Comrade Socratov, their philosopher and guide. The dialogues are widely discursive, covering the field of the monetary problem, the problem of the world market, technocracy, the Five Year Plan, Fascism, International relations, cultural revolution, and the future of the bourgeoisie.

Much that is said is in line with the Church's condemnation of avarice. We prefer to quarrel with the identification of the principle of private property with Victorian profiteering, rather than admit the identification, as do Dr. Hecker's critics, and seek to justify the profiteers by the supposed principle of nineteenth century economists that profits must tend to a minimum!

An account is given of that elusive rationale, communist dialectic, the interpretation of opposites in social evolution. Does Socratov understand the Catholic *complectio oppositorum*? Here as elsewhere he pursues a shadow whose substance he cannot see. But Dr. Hecker's recurrent theme is very properly that of the profit-incentive. It motivates the bourgeois. Religion with Eternal Recompense is the profit motive of the soul. 'There is no profit-incentive in Russia,' yet the worker is incited to work for a surplus dedicated ultimately to the betterment of his class. A little chimerical, perhaps, but (surely) still a profit motive? Revelation is apprehended by Socratov in terms of a mummified eschatology which the Canon is at no pains to revitalize. Chaplaining the plutocracy as a vocation is, of course, less generally admitted in the Church than many pious Catholics would like. But we still hear much of the Anti-God Front of Bolshevism and little about the Anti-God of Good Business. God exploited is not so easy a scandal to preach about as God denied—but no less pressing for its nearness to home and the pharisaical

cant beneath which it hides itself. So that, maybe, we are merely spared further embarrassment by Dr. Hecker's choice of an Anglican cleric to represent (however ineptly) the Christian point of view.

Comrade Socratov is, alas, not alone in failing to recognize the problem in terms of those absolute values of human life which it is the Christian's business to maintain. Nevertheless a more interesting contact with the Comrade might have been attained by an educated Catholic priest. It would have been interesting, for instance, if, in one of the dialogues on money and profit, Socratov had been instructed in the Church's development of St. Thomas' teaching. The Comrade shows only a little more regard for Final Values than his Douglasist critic. He would (very blandly) credit you with the obvious were you to tell him that money is an exchange token: that there are two exchanges, one, *proprius et principalis pecuniae usus est ipsius consumptio seu distractio, secundum quod in commutationibus expenditur*, two, the transaction involving profit (purchasing raw or wholesale) properly called exchange because the subsequent, e.g. retail, price must be relative to the virtue added to the ware by labour (improvement, packing and transport), and because the fairness of the initial price paid and the subsequent price demanded is further governed by risk of loss and damage. 'A little obvious, your premises,' one hears the dialogists murmur—but so obvious that their deductions have been neglected in Dr. Hecker's book. Money is a *signum*—but means have become ends.

As for profit-incentive, would Socratov be surprised to learn that Aquinas justifies it only when it is co-terminous with the sustenance of the family and the common-weal sustenance both material and (to stick to the terminology of the dialogues) 'cultural,' that the Church is not blind to the disingenuousness of many of the 'needs' of family and common weal, that Aquinas damns the use of wealth to accumulate more wealth irrespective of the common good.' Dr. Hecker justifies us in hoping that Socratov is not so detached from Absolute Values as to lay at the door of the *Ecclesia Docens* the unfaithfulness of so many of the faithful. There has been trouble with the faithful in Russia, and certainly one of Dr. Hecker's exponents dislikes force when used, at least by Rome, against the recalcitrant.

Dr. Hecker's dialogists do not forget to discuss the religious question. Here is the crux. To the Anglican canon Socratov is able to say, 'I shall be glad to hear what you have to offer in place of the dead and dying gods which you recognize as being knocked down by modern scientific criticism.' I do not refer merely to the unsubstantial challenge-to-the-supernatural of Victorian scientists to whom modernist canons and Bolshe-

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vics pin their faith. (For not even Socratov in a tight corner is above these bourgeois superstitions.) I mean that attitude to religion which regards revelation, irrespective of its objective truth or untruth, as a means merely of satisfying our emotional demands: I mean that subjectivism, the universal heresy of the day, which is answerable as much for the Anti-God of Bolshevism as for the Anti-God of the Bourgeois.

J. F. T. PRINCE.

MEDIAEVAL STUDIES¹

John Scotus Erigena has long been a problem to historians and philosophers alike. His history has been obscured in a mass of conflicting legends. He has been considered as a heretic (*licet sapiens, haereticus tamen*), as the most dangerous of philosophers, as a famous doctor, as a great Abbot, as a Saint and a Martyr whose name even figured for a little while in the Roman Martyrology. Some have fancied him to have been a pupil of St. Bede the Venerable and of Alcuin; others made him King Alfred's councillor and founder of the University of Oxford, while others credited him with the erection of that of Paris. His thought has likewise been a subject of contradictory statements. On the one hand, he is looked upon as the equal of St. Bonaventure and Dante, the first of the Scholastics and Mystics, and the Father of speculative theology; on the other, as 'the Father of the anti-Scholastics and the most prominent of them,' a monist, a pantheist, freethinker, rationalist, the Father of modern philosophy, the forerunner of Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

Few have hitherto succeeded in disentangling truth from falsity, history from legend. In spite of all the difficulties of his task, Dom M. Cappuyns has given us a very thorough, comprehensive and dispassionate study.² Tracing Erigena's life, works and thought in fully documented chapters, he covers the whole field of his activity and influence.

Born in Ireland in the first decades of the ninth century, Erigena, after some elementary studies at home, passed over into Gaul. Attached to the Court of Charles the Bald, he was entrusted during the King's life with the Palace school. Against the accepted view, Dom Cappuyns shows that, the question of Predestination excluded, he did not take any effective part in

¹ Under the heading *Mediaeval Studies*, we hope to publish each month an authoritative notice of technical studies in mediæval philosophy and theology.—Ed.

² M. CAPPUYNS, O.S.B.: *Jean Scot Erigène. Sa Vie, Son Œuvre, Sa Pensée*. Abbaye du Mont César: Paris, Desclée de Brouwer. Louvain.