

make immediate pronouncements on the immorality of acts of aggression, not because of fear or lack of interest or 'policy,' but because it is difficult and sometimes almost impossible to arrive at the true facts. Similar considerations explain why the Pope does not forbid the Catholics of this or that country to fight. Many things perhaps are obscure at the moment and in the heat of battle; the history of Benedict's attitude and activity in the last war should convince us beyond all doubting that it is wise and prudent to trust loyally and unswervingly to the judgement of the man best equipped in every way to judge, the common Father of Christians.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF RELIGION. A Comparative Study. By E. O. James. (University of London Press; Hodder and Stoughton; 7s. 6d.)

The 'purest' and most academic of scientists find themselves constrained sooner or later to prove themselves of 'use' to humanity. Dr. James is here concerned to advertise his cultural-anthropological and comparative-religious wares as the medicine we are needing in our present mortal disease. His main conclusions should by this time be familiar enough to be trite. They may be summed up by saying that, though religion is a function of society, society is a function of religion, and that without a transcendental religion society must either decompose or divinise itself. What is less familiar is the arguing of this thesis from historical and anthropological premisses rather than from *a priori* principles.

Of course, it has all been done before; by the Catholic Dawson as well as the agnostic Malinowski. Indeed, the first half of Dr. James's book proves to be little more than a *soufflé* of Malinowski's memorable Riddell Lectures. Candidly, we do not think Dr. James has improved upon them. He lacks the former's disciplined lucidity and concreteness; and the superabundance of illustration which he introduces from China to Peru, from Pygmies to Falangists, tends to obscure the argument which his mentor's 'close-ups' so admirably clarified.

To Malinowski Dr. James has added an under-current of Christian apologetic, wherein very clear waters mingle with very muddy, and which in the later chapters comes to the surface and occupies the whole picture. Here again, Dr. James has introduced too much material. It is only fair to say that this book claims to be no more than a 'preliminary statement' to a more thorough treatment which we await with eagerness; but it seems over-ambitious to relate the history of the Church

in a single chapter and to include in it a critique of Dialectical Materialism.

With much that Dr. James is trying to tell us we are in hearty agreement, as well as with his main line of argument. Especially valuable is his interpretation of Nazism, of whose power to satisfy—even in poisoning—starved needs and cravings in the depths of human nature so few in this country seem sensible. Instructive, too, is his analysis of the origins and outcome of Protestantism and secularism, and his indictment of secular education and its results. Those of us who share the belief, urged by Mr. Middleton Murry, that the imposition of a national scheme of compulsory religious education at the present juncture would exacerbate rather than cure the disease, will find in Dr. James's plea for curricula in his own line of studies in schools and universities a valuable suggestion towards a way out of the dilemma. This book, for all its shortcomings and occasional nebulosities and inconsequences, will supply a rudimentary ground-plan for a course of studies of the past which will help to prepare the ground for a less God-forsaking and inhuman future.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

RELIGION IN SCIENCE AND CIVILISATION. By Sir Richard Gregory, F.R.S. (Macmillan; 12s. 6d.)

In his Preface to this book the late Sir Richard Gregory wrote that his main idea had been to show how religion and science are interwoven with the history of civilisation. (Under 'science' he frequently includes all rational thought, and under 'religion' he deals mainly with the mystical element.) He succeeds in this object; but much of the book goes beyond this programme and is largely vitiated by an outlook which is extremely confused on the relation of reason to revelation, among other matters, and calls for fundamental criticism.

Although the book abounds in criticism of orthodox Christianity, it is difficult to find any trace of an understanding of it. Indeed special praise is given to those enlightened elements who 'ask for nothing more than belief in a Supreme Being who created the universe, established laws which rule it, and watches the evolution of man upon the earth.' It did not occur to the author that Christians are characterised by belief in the Incarnation and the access to God thereby given to man. For this rejection of Christ-centred religion we can blame some of the characteristics of English scientific education in the late nineteenth century. First, there is much anthropology in this book, and nowhere has the author escaped from the presupposition