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The Measure of All Things: The Church and Social Justice

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from independence!" How little time is lost in the Philippines doubting about the wisdom of independence and pining over disappointed expectations. A people learns little by little that self-rule has its own difficulties and that many a mistake is made in attempts at solving domestic problems. But mistakes are not the experience only of young governments nor are they fatal. The Republic manages to survive and to keep trying. In the Philippines in 1962 there is general agreement that things are looking up. Optimism has by no means been blotted out.

Because this is a book about ten different regimes in Southeast Asia, it is easier to comment upon it than to review it. The author is informed in a well-read gentleman's way and is aware that his generalizations are often a bad fit. He himself sometimes points this out. To give several examples, first, he finds that all the lands of the region share the characteristic of having underdeveloped economies but instantly modifies their degrees of backwardness. Malaya and the Philippines have the most advanced economies and Laos the least. Second, the countries are inexperienced in self-government, though this is much less true of the Thai and of the Filipinos. Third, political instability characterizes most of these lands, and they all have internal communist problems as well as unsolved minority difficulties. This is true enough, is it not? But, to the degree that it is true of Southeast Asia, it is true of the entire world. It is not a specifying trait. Indeed, differences are much more significant than apparent similarities and on all scores the Philippine condition is hopeful. There is a problem here concerning the Chinese, certainly, but nothing like that of Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia or Thailand.

What one misses in the book is the fruit of that deeper reflection which a competent political analyst might have produced had he lived long in one country and consistently pondered its problems and its efforts toward solving them. It has little to teach an educated resident of any single country of Southeast Asia. It may prove a helpful introduction to undergraduates at Illinois.

MICHAEL MCPHELIN

THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. By Jean-Yves Calvez, S.J., and Jacques Perrin, S.J. London: Burns & Oates, 1961 (English translation), 466 pp.

Praised as the "most authoritative study to date of the social encyclicals; indispensable as a background to *Mater et Magistra*", this volume is a very successful attempt to set forth the social doctrine

of the Church as a whole for the first time. The coherence and unity in the doctrine gradually developing from Leo XIII to Pius XII is set forth in a scholarly and readable way in order, as the authors state, that "all may become aware of the methods of analysis of which faith inspires the steady application in the face of social problems."

The primary purpose which the popes have set before themselves in all these matters social is "to awaken in all those of whom they have the care before Christ our Lord, a personal and deeply reasoned consciousness of the meaning which their faith has for social and economic life." Those who find the doctrine of *Mater et Magistra* strange on the lips of the pope and fail to see the nexus between the social doctrine of the Church and the deposit of faith will find this book a rewarding experience. They will find what is original in a Christian method of approaching the social and economic realities. The Church is not claiming to provide technical solutions to technical social and economic problems nor is it trying to substitute itself for each man as he goes about the many tasks for which he personally is responsible in conscience. The Church is concerned when, and because, there is a moral side of social and economic questions, and the doctrine of the Church has for its content principles and unchanging elements, not contingent arrangements. By its intervention, as Pius XII pointed out, "the Church claims its right to bring back into reckoning the requirements of a forgotten morality: 'The Church clings tenaciously to its task of seeing that more account is taken of man than of economic or technical advantages.'"

When the Church finds itself in conflict with the claims of economics and technology, it does not go on to make any pejorative judgment on them, as the authors note. Rather, it affirms that its social doctrine could not do without the most advanced developments in those fields; it encourages this development, for that is essential to the realization of the doctrinal principles which it teaches. The Church only insists that the development be an ordered one, keeping man "at the pinnacle of the created universe, making him, in economics and politics, the measure of all things".

The Church limits herself to the essential determinations of the natural law and to the fundamental conditions of action conformable to the law of charity. Beyond them the Church has and claims no competence, since it is a question of particular applications which are always subject to change. Nor does the Church wish to usurp the functions of legitimate legislators in matters concerning the legal framework of political and social life.

This volume could hardly have made a more timely appearance on the scene, coming as it did just when it was needed to help us explore the rich treasures contained in *Mater et Magistra*. Those who start their study of the encyclical after reading this work will see how the doctrine has developed over the years, why it has to develop, since, as Pius XII said, "Not only is social doctrine a constant guide for practice, it is itself also guided by practice".

The reader cannot but be impressed at the vision expressed in the social teaching of the popes, and the emphasis on the positive and on progress and on the freedom of the individual. Those who have latent prejudices against such teaching will probably have their suspicions and fears allayed if they will apply themselves objectively and honestly to this book to see for themselves just what the Church does teach and just what she claims for her own field of competence. Those who have no such prejudices will find their faith fortified by reason and be able to give to others a justification for their proud attachment to the social doctrine of the Church of Christ.

G. W. HEALY

THE WORDS RING TRUE

BEFORE HIS FACE: Meditations for Priests and Religious. By Gaston Courtois. New York: Herder and Herder, 1961. 349 pp.

Superlatives are generally suspect. But the temptation to indulge in them is very strong when one is reviewing a book like that of Father Courtois. **BEFORE HIS FACE**, translated from the original French edition **FACE AU SEIGNEUR** by Sister Helen Madeleine, may be recommended unreservedly to all priests. It should prove particularly useful to those who, under pressure of parish work and almost through no fault of their own, have lost their taste for meditation, or whose spiritual ideals may have grown dim with the passage of time and their fervor faint. Upon such souls Father Courtois' words will fall with all the light and warmth and penetration of grace itself.

The book contains twenty-five chapters each of which consists of: 1) a *meditation* presented not precisely in points, but rather in the form of a conference; 2) a *discourse* in which our Lord speaks directly to the prayer and the latter responds; 3) an *examination of conscience* often surprisingly detailed; 4) *resolutions*