

in our English-speaking world.—Sincerely yours in Christ,
St Mary's Seminary, Roland Park, WILLIAM O'SHEA
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REVIEWS

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF: THE UNRESOLVED CONFLICT. By David Lack, F.R.S. (Methuen and Co. Ltd; 10s. 6d.)

'As impartial a book as has ever been written on a highly controversial subject': this is how one reviewer has described it. Certainly the author (who is best known for his excellent work on bird behaviour) has no axe to grind. The kernel of his book is a scholarly, lucid and very readable exposition of the present state of knowledge about evolution, all within fifty pages or so. It must be clear to anyone from his account how compelling is the evidence, and how strikingly modern genetics has confirmed Darwin's surmises by actual demonstration of ways in which natural selection can bring about the effects he ascribed to it. In view of all this it is perhaps misleading to describe evolution as a theory; this term has, for the general public, associations of uncertainty and lack of proof which are quite inappropriate.

'Evolutionary ethics'—publicized a few years ago on the *Home Service* by Julian Huxley—attempts to account also for man's moral sense in terms of natural selection. This attempt is as utterly unconvincing as the evidence for the evolution of his body is convincing; as Darwin had realized and Dr Lack emphasizes, there is no 'survival value' in the virtues.

Various Christian and agnostic views bearing on evolution are discussed very objectively and with sympathy, but it is a pity that no distinction is made between the views of some naive Christians and the orthodox teaching of the Church. The author insists that there is, still, a conflict between 'Darwinism' and Christianity. But his definition of Darwinism includes the belief that 'man has evolved wholly by natural means', and this, as he says, 'is a philosophical and not a scientific claim', which obviously does conflict with Christian belief. On the author's own showing, there is nothing incompatible between the scientific claims of evolutionary theory and orthodox Christian belief: the title of the book is bound to give the wrong impression (but no matter if it thereby attracts more readers). This is

not to say that the Christian biologist finds it at all easy to live with both; but I believe this is mainly because most of us find it very hard to enter into modes of thinking alien to our own subject.

One of the best things in the book is the historical introduction. Enlivened with quotations from the main combatants, it recreates for us the authentic flavour of the early years of this great debate. The documentation is excellent.

E. WANGERMANN

FOR MEN OF ACTION. By Fr Yves de Montcheuil. (Geoffrey Chapman; 11s.)

This is a profoundly interesting book. It should be read not only by those who are trying to live a full Catholic life in the world, but also by those whose task it is to guide such people. The book should be read slowly for it is closely written. It pulls no punches, demanding the highest standards and ideals from those who would follow what it teaches. The chapters on 'The Catholic Concept of Vocation', on 'Unconditional Commitment' and the final one discussing 'Temporal Action', are all memorable for their wisdom and insight; I look forward to rereading them often.

Amongst his other activities, Fr de Montcheuil was spiritual adviser to the students at the Sorbonne and the general approach of this work makes it particularly valuable for those who have to advise students. The author was killed by the Gestapo in August 1944. This book was compiled from his unpublished notes. Fr de Montcheuil has, however, been ill-served by his American translator; the English of this rendering is stilted, many of the sentences are of inordinate length, whilst the punctuation tends to be both rudimentary and erratic. Furthermore, the book is printed in a most unattractive type. The result is that *For Men of Action* is frequently far more difficult to follow than it need be. This is most unfortunate because readers who could gain help and encouragement from these pages may thus be discouraged from attempting to follow Fr de Montcheuil's closely reasoned thoughts.

Two quotations must suffice to show the quality of the matter of this book; also, the first one is typical of the badness of the translation. '... for every Christian, the vocation is a source of an uninterrupted dialogue with God, in which no other can take part and which constitutes the very essence of the inner life; a dialogue in which our question, "Lord, what do you wish me to do?" are already but a response and an acquiescence to His hold on us.' (p. 49.) Secondly, 'If the faithful do not have the courage to assume their responsibilities and if they develop the habit of trying to cover themselves unnecessarily with a decision of authority, there is the danger of giving the