

## BOEKBESPREKINGS

*Gibbon, E.: Christianity and the Decline of Rome.* Abridged and Edited by Jacob Sloan, pp. 512. Collier Paperback, price: 75 cents.

As can be seen from the title, the chapters included in this volume of Gibbon's masterly classic, deal largely with the spread and victory of Christianity and the role played by the church and of the Christian religion in the whole pattern of Rome's decline. Gibbon was the first to treat the rise of Christianity as a natural and rationally explainable historical phenomenon that could and should be analysed without sentimentalism or religious prejudice. And as Gibbon treated the rise of Christianity within an already declining Roman Empire as a phenomenon that gave added impetus to this decline with its inevitable military defeat by the hands of barbarian invaders from across the Alps, the editor was able to "lift out" of the original the section dealing with Christianity as such. It takes the reader from 285-313 A.D. (chapter XIII of the original) to the years 341-390 A.D., that is the death of Julian and the "disgraceful treaty of Jovian" (chapter XXIV).

G. P. Gooch correctly points out that Gibbon was blind to the significance of many of the factors such as economic, demographic, social, political and possibly even climatic that interacted with one another to eventually create a condition that lead inevitably to the military collapse of the Roman Empire. He ascribes Gibbon's overemphasis of Christianity as a cause of this collapse to "contempt for religious feelings and belief". Professor C. D. Gordon of McGill University, U.S.A., correctly points out in his thoughtful introduction to this volume, that Gibbon lived in an age of new enlightenment and scepticism. It was the century of Voltaire, Hume and the French Revolution in which old and existing values and dogmatic philosophical and religious ideas and beliefs were systematically questioned. Yet, despite the age of intellectual adventure and the undermining of existing social, political and religious beliefs and attitudes which were to culminate in the French Revolution, Gibbon could not be described as a philosopher of revolt. He was, however, imbued with the new intellectual spirit in the sense that he believed like his counterparts on the continent and especially in the France of Voltaire, that all historical processes, including that of Christianity, could be approached as intellectual problems that could be solved in a universal spirit of objective detachment.

Historical scholarship and documentary research had not during the eighteenth century advanced to such an extent that all the available material could be at the disposal of or assessable to writers. The excitement of the age in the new-found intellectual freedom furthermore precluded men from attaining complete intellectual detachment from the forces with which they had come to grips and which were an inheritance of the past ages as well as newly created by the expectancy, albeit false, of a new utopia of intellectualism.

It is only today, after these forces had spent themselves that modern scholars could look back at the past ages with greater perspective especially with the help of detailed historical material that has subsequently become available as a result of research carried out by many scholars over a hundred years. With the availability of new material and with greater time perspective historians are in a position to refute some of Gibbon's conclusions, but his method of approach, his scientific detachment and unparalleled grasp of fact, has withstood the test of time. "Today historians can only apply Gibbon's methods to refute his conclusions", Professor Gordon so aptly puts in the introduction. Validity of conclusions are, however, never a constant in historical writing, but always subject to time distance and re-interpretation. It was

for instance only towards the end of the century that sympathy and understanding for the Middle Ages became a vogue as a result of the advent of the Romantic Movement.

This neatly bound paperback volume by Colliers can be recommended to all senior students in history who often as not accept opinions on great historians of the past and rarely if ever read the originals.

T. S. van Rooyen.

*Gibbon, E.*: Barbarism and the Fall of Rome. Abridged and edited by Jacob Sloan with a Foreword by Prof. C. D. Gordon. 382 pages. Collier Paperback, 1962. Price: 76 cents.

This is an abridged version of Vol. II of Gibbon's monumental history of the decline and eventual collapse of the Roman Empire. Since the numbering of the chapters follows that of the original, the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, this volume begins with chapter XXVI i.e. the first Barbarian Invasion of 365-395 A.D. and continues through to chapter XXXVIII i.e. the last days of the Roman Empire in the West. Those chapters which do not appear in this volume are retained in brackets in the Contents page so that the reader knows what has been left out.

This volume is in fact the second in this edition, the first being *Christianity and the Decline of Rome* and because of its arrangement, may be read as an independent work.

Apart from the fact that Gibbon's monumental work is today still a valuable source for research workers and a classic example of seventeenth century historiography, it still fascinates the general reader and still is a fine example of historical exposition and synthesis for the academic historian. Gibbon's complete mastery of style, his avoidance of self-contradiction and repetition and his mastery of careful planning and lucid arrangement of the mass of material available to him, has given to this work an agelessness and quality of timelessness that has not only made it a classic in the English language, but also an example for historians to try and emulate.

The passing of time and the availability of new archaeological and other documentary material, have invalidated much of Gibbon's conclusions. His lack of philosophical approach to the vast subject that he has tackled, and deficiency in matter do not, however, invalidate the method in which he has set out and interpreted his scattered material.

Apart from the factual material that the student of history can glean from the pages of Gibbon, the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* has a theoretical and methodological interest for the post-graduate student. It is a classic example of the application of the science of method especially in connection with the art of exposition and synthesis. It is furthermore a fine example of eighteenth century historiography and an analysis of its material and factual deficiencies compared with other works that have appeared subsequent to it during the last hundred years, bear witness to the extent to which the addition of new materials necessitates a re-interpretation of the past.

It has become common practice in our post-graduate classes to read *about* historians. Few students in fact study the original writings of the historians they learn about. This of necessity leads to an acceptance of opinions without a critical and theoretical analyses of the works studied. It tends to the reproducing of ideas and evaluation, a memorising of points of view, without exercising the student's critical

and theoretical ability. Few students have come to realize the significance or the real greatness of the heritage left us by these great masters and servants of Clío. Now that this excellently bound but yet cheap paperback abridged edition of Gibbon's work has become available, we would suggest that students be encouraged to read Gibbon in the original.

T. S. van Rooyen.

*Crossley, H. and Groenewald, J. C.:* Guidance, Standard VI. Pp. 63. Price: 80c., Die Voortrekkerpers Beperk.

This little book, written by Mr. H. Crossley, Headmaster of the Hyde Park High School, Johannesburg, and Dr. J. C. Groenewald, Head of the Transvaal Education Department's Psychological Guidance Service, is intended as a handbook for use by the Std. VI pupils in their weekly Guidance period. The intention of this course is not simply to make the child aware of possible future careers, but has as basic aim the creation of an awareness in the child of his place in the society into which he was born and the duties expected of him as a person within that society. It ranges from exercises in simple self-analysis to an understanding of and explanation of that imponderable of our twentieth century educational system known as Differentiated Education.

Child guidance of this kind with its basic psychological formula of "know yourself and your fellowmen" with its eventual outcrop of the shades of a Dale Carnegie, is an attempt to substitute in a pocket edition of what had been known as basic education under the old educational system. Teachers of History especially would feel non-plussed when they hear that part of the course under the title "Your People" is simply an abstraction of something that in fact is part and parcel of what had always been understood as the formative or educational value of History as a school subject. The old idea that Citizenship should be part of the History syllabus and with it the basic principle that understanding is a product of knowledge and not simply of explanation, is thereby relegated to an outmoded educational system.

This little book is written for the Std. VI child to read. It is simple and direct, but what would the child, and for that matter most adults understand by an imperative statement with its possible politico-philosophical ramifications as ". . . and must bear in mind that every other nation has the democratic right . . ."

If Child Guidance as an addendum to the various subjects taught in the lower classes of the secondary school has come to stay, then this little book would fulfil a felt need.

T. S.

*Hofman, Dr. Werner:* Ideengeschichte der sozialen Bewegung des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Sammlung Göschen, Band 1205/1205a, pp. 243.

Soos die titel aandui handel die boek oor ideëgeskiedenis, 'n vertakking van die geskiedeniswetenskap wat in Suid-Afrika nog maar weinig aandag geniet het. Die skrywer begin met die *Aufklärungsphilosophie* omdat daarin vir die eerste keer in die wêreldgeskiedenis 'n beeld van die mensheid-as-geheel ontwerp is. Die skrywer gaan die *denk*geskiedenis oor sosiale idees vanaf dié periode na en voer dit deur tot in die

20ste eeu. Hy behandel verskillende lande soos bv. Engeland, Frankryk en Duitsland. In die eerste afdeling sien ons die sosiale idees in die ontwikkelings tydperk van die moderne industriële samelewing. Die tweede afdeling handel oor die ontplooiende kapitalisme. Dit lei die skrywer na die idees i.v.m. die sosiale beweging in die tydperk van die georganiseerde kapitalisme. Hierin kom die toestande in Rusland aan die orde asook idees in die Westerse lande. Die skrywer sluit af met die idees van die sosiale beweging en die industrialiserende lande van die hede.

Die werk berus op deeglike bronnestudie en is glashelder geskrywe.

F. A. van Jaarsveld

*Albrecht-Carrié, René: Europe since 1815: From the Ancien Régime to the Atomic Age.* 560 pp., Harper and Brothers, New York, 1962.

Professor Albrecht-Carrié of Barnard College is a productive historian who has many works of high order to his credit including *Italy at the Peace Conference* (1938), *Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini* (1950), *A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna* (1958), and *France, Europe and the Two World Wars* (1960). He is one of the many Europeans to find recognition and achieve distinction in the land of his adoption. Born in Smyrna, Turkey, he grew up in Italy and France and emigrated to the United States in 1920 with a background that has equipped him eminently to steer the uninitiated through the maze of European politics and policies.

A comprehensive text-book for students is Albrecht-Carrié's latest book; it is intended to provide "a broad framework of events" and he has eschewed any elaborate review of literature, the arts and sciences since "a discussion of all aspects of history might easily degenerate into superficial flimsiness and would exceed the competence of any author". Nor has he attempted to provide an exhaustive bibliography but has given a useful selective one, it being mainly confined to works that have appeared in English (pp. 533-542). The volume is liberally illustrated with small-size portraits, photographs, cartoons and maps.

The book's structure rests on three massive pillars. First of all there is the period 1815-1870 that witnessed the contests of the forces of liberalism and conservatism; secondly, the period 1871-1919 in which European influence in the world reached its zenith and thirdly, the period 1919-1961 in which Europe surrendered her dominant role because of "the mortal hurt" that she had inflicted on herself; slowly she sought to readjust herself to a new position between the new giants — no longer able to dominate the earth but still a real and potential centre of power and influence of "the first magnitude".

The reader carries away with him an impression of vast impersonal forces at work, of processes in which men, even these of the cataclysmic breed, have had but minor roles. The presentation perhaps lacks a little sprinkling of the salt and pepper of life. Whilst generally writing in felicitous fashion the author occasionally lapses from grace: The "various above-mentioned categories" is deplorable officialese, "albeit" an archaic term, whilst the meaningless phrase "to be sure" recurs rather too frequently. But these are minor blemishes in an excellent text-book.

A. M. Davey.

*Wolf, John B.*: The Emergence of European Civilization from the Middle Ages to the Opening of the Nineteenth Century. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1962, 751 pp. geïllustreerd.

Die Amerikaanse historici is bekend vir hulle leerboeke oor geskiedenis waarvan sommige ook in ons land gebruik word. Hulle is *van Europa* maar nie *in Europa* nie. Dit stel hulle in staat of vanaf 'n afstand terug te kyk op die ontwikkeling van die Europese beskawing, wat per slot van rekening hulle eie erfgoedere is.

Hierdie boek is 'n weldeurdagte verslag van die Europese beskawing vanaf die Middeleeue tot aan die begin van die 19de eeu. Die eerste deel handel oor die Middeleeuse oorspronge van politieke instellinge van die moderne Europa, sosiale en ekonomiese patrone en die veranderinge in gedagtes en uitdrukking daarvan. Die tweede afdeling handel oor die godsdienstige opstand in die Kerk van die Middeleeue, nl. die Lutherse Hervorming en die uitbreiding van die Hervorming in die algemeen. Die Spaanse hegemonie en die godsdiensoorloë word bondig weergegee. Die derde afdeling handel oor die 17de eeu, 'n eeu van spanning en konflik. Die Europese samelewing word vir verskillende lande uiteengesit soos Engeland, Frankryk, Rusland, ens. Daar is hoofstukke oor die barok-tydperk, die idees oor God, mens en wêreld. Die vierde boek dek die 18de eeu. Daarin word verwys na o.a. die sentrale en oostelike dele van Europa, die koloniale ryke van die Weste, die oorloë wat daarmee saamhang, die Britse ryk, die Franse beskawing en die verligting wat betref wetenskap, filosofie en geleerdheid in die algemeen. Die vyfde boek behandel die sosiale en ekonomiese patrone op die vooraand van die Franse Rewolusie, die ontwikkeling van die Rewolusie, die Franse imperium en die herstel van orde gedurende die jare 1814-1825.

Die skrywer gee meer as net beskawingsgeskiedenis. Hy toon die verbande met die politiek aan. Die benadering is egter fris en nuut insoverre hy die samelewing in Europa as 'n *geheel* behandel. Dit is nie 'n maklike taak nie. Die Europese geskiedenis was meestal uiteengerek deur verslae oor individuele lande te skryf. Wolf probeer hiervan wegkom en gee 'n geïntegreerde beeld van die beskawing as één beweging. Hy slaag daarin om die nasionale geskiedenis te oorbrug en die beskawingsgeskiedenis as 'n geheel te behandel.

Die eerste afdeling is bedoel as 'n inleiding tot die Europese kultuur. Dit dek 'n periode tot die einde van die 15de eeu. Die vier volgende afdelings handel oor die groter probleme waarmee die Westerse mens vir drie eeu lank gekonfronteer was. Hy analiseer daarin die kenmerkende vorme wat in die proses van die Westerse geskiedenis opgekom het. Daardeer kry ons 'n begrip van die ontwikkelings t.o.v. godsdien, politiek, ekonomie, oorlog, kuns, wetenskap en geleerdheid. Die laaste deel behandel die sosiale en politieke omwentelinge wat die Westerse beskawing geskud het en wat soveel van die gedagtes en handeling van die Westerse mense daarna beheers het. Dié rewolusie word geïnterpreteer as 'n *versnelling* van die proses in die beskawing eerder as 'n breuk in sy verdere vooruitgang. Nie net studente nie, maar almal wat in die waardes van die Westerse beskawing belangstel, sal baat vind deur die lees en bestudering van hierdie boek.

F. A. van Jaarsveld.