

ROOTS OF CHANGE

By JOSEPH H. FICHTER, S. J.
D. Appleton-Century Co.,
New York, \$2.50

This is no mere history of economics and social thought. It is a series of lively biographical sketches into which are fused the ideas and theories that a number of outstanding personalities have succeeded in rooting into the intellectual soil of history during the past three hundred years. The author has striven for a logical arrangement for the purpose of emphasizing the close relationship between apparently isolated events. In this he has succeeded brilliantly.

Throughout, one thought keeps reappearing like a leitmotif: The dualistic nature of human existence. Man is not merely an animal. He is also a spiritual being. Nevertheless, despite the metaphysical note Father Fichter stresses time and again the futility of attempting to solve economic problems by the moral approach. However, he is not consistent in his attitude, for his thesis is that industrial problems can be solved only by a return to Christian principles. Labor and capital must resolve their differences. But while he rejects the Marxian theory of the inevitability of the class conflict, he makes a strong plea for better treatment of the employee by the employer.

In his discussion of private property, Father Fichter tries to exclude any consideration of morals, but he cannot avoid a moralistic conclusion when he states that although individual ownership is necessary, the owner has no absolute right to his property but must use it properly so as to benefit the community. But if property is capital, how else can the owner use it except to render services to the community? Henry George, to whom Father Fichter ascribes a somewhat minor role in his historical drama, made an extremely interesting exposition of property in his letter to Pope Leo XIII. Incidentally, his belief that George's remedy for the abolition of poverty would cause an expansion of government indicates very little familiarity with the latter's writings.

—RAYMOND V. McNALLY