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No. 4

THE ORGANIZATION BY NATIONS AT CONSTANCE

Louise R. Loomis

THE SCHOOL OF ST. VICTOR

Joseph Patrick Healy

JOHN DURY, ADVOCATE OF CHRISTIAN REUNION

J. M. Batten

BOOK REVIEWS

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CONTENTS

THE ORGANIZATION BY NATIONS AT CONSTANCE By <i>Louise R. Loomis</i> , Wells College, Aurora-on-Cayuga, N. Y.	191
THE SCHOOL OF ST. VICTOR By <i>Joseph Patrick Healy</i> , Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.	211
JOHN DURY, ADVOCATE OF CHRISTIAN REUNION By <i>J. M. Batten</i> , Scarritt College for Christian Workers, Nashville, Tenn.	222
AMONG THE MEMBERS	232
IN MEMORIAM	233
BOOK REVIEWS	234
JACKSON, A. V. W.: <i>Researches in Manichaeism</i> ... M. Sprengling	
JORDAN, W. K.: <i>The Development of Religious Toleration in England</i> M. M. Knappen	
EMERTON, E.: <i>The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII</i> F. W. Buckler	
WHITNEY, J. P.: <i>Hildebrandine Essays</i> F. W. Buckler	
MACDONALD, A. J.: <i>Hildebrand</i> C. H. Moehlman	
BETT, H.: <i>Nicholas of Cusa</i> A. W. Nagler	
JONES, RUFUS M.: <i>Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth</i> Andrew C. Zenos	
CHURCH, F. C.: <i>The Italian Reformers: 1534- 1564</i> John M. Lenhart	
NEWMAN, A. H.: <i>Manual of Church History, Vol. II, Revised</i> R. H. Nichols	
STEPHAN-LEUBE: <i>Die Neuzeit</i> W. Pauck	
GILLETT, C. R.: <i>Burned Books</i> Pierce Butler	

- MULLIN, F. A.: *A History of the Work of the
Cistercians in Yorkshire* John T. McNeill
- TOURSCHER, F. E.: *The Hogan Schism* A. C. McGiffert, Jr.
- BLOCK, M.: *The New Church in the New
World* R. E. E. Harkness
- McNAUGHT, J. C.: *The Celtic Church and the
See of Peter* T. P. Oakley

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THE ORGANIZATION BY NATIONS AT CONSTANCE

LOUISE R. LOOMIS

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The Council of Constance, like any other serious event involving many people and lasting over a considerable period of time, can be studied from many points of view. It started out as a gathering for purely ecclesiastical purposes. But some twenty or thirty thousand persons from every class of society, except, perhaps, the lowest, cannot come and remain together for almost four years to discuss one set of difficult and complicated questions without, intentionally or unintentionally, raising many other questions, social, religious, philosophic, economic and political, and forming for the moment, as it were, a microcosm of the forces of the age. Most of the issues that agitated Europe five hundred years ago cropped up sooner or later at Constance, the cost of living, the obnoxiousness of robber barons and private warfare, the right and wrong of tyrannicide, the conflict between Germans and Poles in the East and between English and French in the West, to say nothing of the special issues with which the Council was expected to deal, the claims of three popes to be the only true successors of St. Peter, the perilous teachings of Wiclef and Hus and the worldliness and corruption of church administration.

One phase of the Council's activities is of particular interest to students of politics or of that social or psychological phenomenon which we call nationalism. For at Constance, national feeling early expressed itself in an organization by nations, in total disregard of papal will and ecumenical tradition, and national feeling affected the whole course of events, furthering progress at one stage and paralyzing it at another. Not that every state of Europe obtained recognition as a separate entity. The Scandinavian, Po-

more than half the book. Nicholas occupies a unique place in the author's opinion in being among the first to discredit the story of the Donation of Constantine and much else in the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, Valla's devastating criticism following a few years later. The former likewise voiced his suspicions regarding Pseudo-Dionysius.

Although Nicholas took his point of departure from the Neoplatonist metaphysics, he attempted to overcome its dualism with the bold suggestion of the unity of all in the theory that God and the universe were really correlative terms, one to be considered as the ultimate, the other as the derived reality. Actually, however, he merely pushed the problem farther back by positing a dualism in the very nature of God. Here he built upon Erigena and Eckhart. Cusa anticipated Descartes in his emphasis upon and his use of mathematics. In his resolution of all contraries into a higher unity he reminds one of Hegel. The author intimates that Cusa's problem and his treatment thereof were similar to those of F. H. Bradley. Indeed, his teaching regarding degrees of reality has a modern sound. One suggestion, moreover, harmonizes well with recent English philosophy, namely, that "no ultimate constituent is now intelligible except in its relation to the whole system within which it acts" (p. 159f). Again, in his cosmology Cusa was a precursor of Copernicus, Bruno, and Kepler, with a pronounced direct influence upon the latter two. In relating the empirical to the transcendental, Cusa reminds one of Kant, and in his thought of the relativity of all knowledge he anticipated modern tendencies in philosophy.

The author finds the chief defect of the Cusan philosophy in its accentuated intellectualism in the direction of Gnosticism. This was largely due to its failure to recognize love as well as knowledge as a controlling principle of religion. Cusa lived too much in the region of bloodless abstractions. And yet, his doctrine of faith and salvation comes close to the evangelical positions of the Protestant reformers. In his summary the author concludes that the concept of unity was the focal point of the whole Cusan philosophy. In the political and ecclesiastical life of the Empire as well as in the realm of thought unity was sought and found "in the superessential Unity of God" (p. 204). The book is well documented, admirably written, a scholarly production; but one misses a bibliography.

A. W. Nagler.

Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Ill.

MYSTICISM AND DEMOCRACY IN THE ENGLISH COMMONWEALTH

By RUFUS M. JONES. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932.
xiii+184 pages. \$2.00.

Whether there is or is not a necessary connection between mysticism and democracy depends on the content given to either or both of these baffling and often irritating terms. From the point of view of mysticism as an inner unworldly, emotional, and worshipful attitude toward God, a person might be a thorough going mystic and yet have no interest whatever in democracy as a system of political organization. And from the

point of view of democracy as a theory of the state in which every individual is guaranteed an equal voice with all others in the administration of public interests, an enthusiastic democrat may be a cold-blooded unbeliever in the existence of any sort of God. But it is not in the sense which thus disconnects the concepts from each other that Dr. Rufus M. Jones uses the terms. Mysticism is to him the individual's most intimate and direct response to the inworking of the divine Spirit. Democracy is the assertion and practice of the individual's right to a share in the voice that determines the course of the community's life. Since the individual must live Godward and manward at the same time, he can not separate between his mysticism and his democracy.

History attests this at some of its critical moments. Of these the era of the English Commonwealth was one. And to the era of the English Commonwealth Dr. Jones goes to study the interplay of mysticism and democracy. What he finds here is groups of sturdy individualists inflamed by the consciousness of immediate contact with God. But they are waging an uncompromising warfare for the right of human spirits to organize themselves as equals under God. Naturally, this type of contention was not much encouraged in the high stream of history. The student must look for it in the side currents of the obscurer sects of Christians, who stood for the "self-governing church." Such were the Seekers, the Quakers, the Brownists and various others. No exhaustive list of them could be made since the principle for which they stood admitted of dissent in the smallest practically organized group of them. It is an interesting field. Yet, from the nature of it, the results that the historian obtains as a reward for his patient labor are meager. Dr. Jones has explored it with the meticulous care of a genuine historian and the glowing enthusiasm of a mystic.

To cap the climax, he assures us that his object in entering the field was something other than information for the mind. He seeks light, to be sure, but he seeks it as a help to solve problems of present day living importance. What we most need today, he thinks, is a great spiritual awakening, and in a period of spiritual fervor such as that of the English Commonwealth, we may perhaps find the secret of its presence. By presenting the exact facts and interpreting the earnestness and heroism of a generation of Spirit-filled men he hopes to quicken the pulse of the spiritual life in our day. Let us trust that his little book may realize his hope.

Andrew C. Zenos.

Chicago Presbyterian Seminary.

THE ITALIAN REFORMERS: 1534-1564

By FREDERIC CORSS CHURCH. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932. xii+428 pages. \$5.00.

This book is what the title promises, a study of the early Italian reformers and not of the Italian Reformation. It aims at comprehensiveness, including not only theologians but all reformers, even some of the gentler sex. The treatment is very unequal, some of the lesser lights like the diplomat Maggi and the amateur Protestant D'Oria receiving more space than the real coryphe. A number of reformers find hardly more