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John M. Lothian
University of Aberdeen

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Reviews

Robert Brank Fulton. *Adam Smith speaks to our times*. Boston. The Christopher Publishing House. 1963. 143 pp. \$3.00.

It is difficult at first to see for what class of reader Professor Fulton designed this book. It is not sufficiently scholarly to appeal to scholars, nor sufficiently philosophical, in the strict sense, to meet the demands of the philosophers. If intended for economists, it takes little note of the development of modern economic theory, or of the developments of public finance and of state responsibility in economic and social matters that have made the voice of Adam Smith more distant than Dr. Fulton would like us to believe.

The writer's method, after a necessarily very brief sketch of eighteenth-century "climate of opinion," is to reduce Smith's opinions, in ethics and political economy, to a series of headings, supported very largely and almost solely by innumerable quotations of very varied length from his writings and from modern critical opinion on these. It is the method of the S. O. S. tabloid "aids to students." In some ways and for certain purposes it has much to recommend it. It gives a clear, easily comprehensible, succinct tabulation of a writer's views, without the effort and energy required in travelling laboriously with him up the steps by which he reaches the end of his argument. But it does not, especially when the quotations are as numerous and as extensive as Dr. Fulton employs, enable one to share the mental companionship either of the original author in arriving at his conclusion, or of the writer who seeks to expound and apply those conclusions to modern problems. It is the method of the catechist, of the teacher who has to make clear to his students in the shortest way what Adam Smith thought and what they are to think about him. It precludes the possibility of a deep understanding of Smith, who must be accompanied on his journeys if his views are to be shared, but it produces a book which may be useful to those who are beginners in the study of that philosopher or to those who have beginners to instruct.

It is perhaps inappropriate to apply to a semi-popular and unpre-

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tentious book such as this the criteria of exact scholarship. But there is surely an unwarranted laxity in the statement that "counter-claims [to extreme rationalism and individualism] by the school of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler and Hume" were made "in the latter part of the century," when one recalls that all of these writers published their most influential philosophical works within the first forty-five years of the century [p. 22]. It is true, again, that Smith *may* have been "born into a Scottish Presbyterian family," since his father was in the service of an ardent Whig lord; nevertheless, that father came from Aberdeenshire, where there were many Episcopalians, and the Snell Exhibition, which Smith accepted, was intended to assist candidates in their preparation for service in the *English* church. As Dugald Stewart tells us, in his Memoir, Smith "had been originally destined for the Church of England, and with that view had been sent to Oxford." In view of Dr. Fulton's strong emphasis, in the latter part of his book, on the close relationship of Smith's teaching with Christianity, it should be kept in mind that Smith had very little patience with ecclesiastical institutions and particularly with the elaborate rituals sometimes formulated by them. As Stewart indicates, even at this early stage, "not finding the ecclesiastical profession suitable to his taste, he chose to consult, in this instance, his own inclination, in preference to the wishes of his friends." As he later indicated in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith was very well aware that "frivolous observances" can be all too easily and frequently be substituted for "acts of justice and beneficence," and that "sacrifices and ceremonies and vain supplications" may be used "to bargain with the Deity for fraud, and perfidy, and violence."

One can sympathise with Dr. Fulton's effort, as a Christian teacher, to draw parallels between the moral teachings of Christianity and those of Smith, and his conclusions are, in a general way, justified. But one must object to the indiscriminating method of finding parallels which equates phrases from St. Paul's description of love (1st Corinthians XIII) such as "love is not jealous or boastful," "is not arrogant or rude" etc., with the single words "humanity" and "sensibility," respectively, and others of the same tenor, from Smith. It would be equally easy to find such "parallels" from any eighteenth-century moral essayist—including Hume! Yet Dr. Fulton finds in these "parallels" "another illustration of how close Smith is in much of his thinking to the Biblical approach to life." (p. 113)

Something of the same absence of subtler discrimination is to be seen in the author's treatment of the applicability to modern problems of both the ethical and social-economic principles of Smith. The more

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important modern thinkers on ethical and economic matters are not brought forward for comparison, though some of the more favourable modern critics of Smith are cited, especially when their views support Dr. Fulton's own interpretation. Perhaps one expects too much from a generally modest task of this kind: but when one meets the conclusion at page 102, that Smith's approach is to be described as "a deistically flavoured ethical theism of Christian orientation," one might be tempted to imagine, had one not read the previous hundred pages, that one had been led through a profound and subtle analysis of a great thinker: and that would not be the case. The theme is greater than the book, which remains at the level of the popular expository sermon.

Casual slips occur at p. 30, where 1864 should be 1764, and at p. 76, note 83, where "order of mean" should obviously read "order of men."

JOHN M. LOTHIAN
UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson. *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*. Edited by Joseph Slater. New York. Columbia University Press. 1964. 622 pp. \$10.00.

When Charles Eliot Norton published his edition of the correspondence of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle in 1883, the book won immediate fame which has lasted through the years. The edition, however, had peculiarities and deficiencies which have become more egregious with the passage of time. Norton, working quickly, did not find or publish all of the letters in the correspondence, nor did he include either an informative introduction or an adequate number of explanatory annotations. Furthermore, he made deletions and excisions where he thought such were necessary, and even made minor changes in style and punctuation. The demanding task of re-editing this important correspondence for the modern reader has now been admirably performed by Professor Slater, who is chairman of the Department of English at Colgate University. The 232 letters in his volume exceed by forty-one the number of letters included in Norton's last edition of 1899. Han-