

BOOK REVIEWS



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Social and Political Thought in Byzantium from Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus. By ERNEST BARKER. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957. Pp. xvi, 239. \$4.80.)

It is difficult, indeed, to encompass the contributions made by Ernest Barker to the study of politics, both in the Classical world and in the areas of more modern subjects. The combination of rare training, facility, and appreciation of the Greek and Latin languages, as well as modern German, for instance, has enabled Professor Barker to become one of the most noted linguists and scholars in political science. He has not been merely a translator, for his great historical and philosophical knowledge has enabled him also to cultivate an appreciation among thousands of students of the politics of the Greeks and the Romans, and now to undertake the limited but remarkable inquiry into social and political thought in Byzantium.

The work begins with two introductory chapters dealing with the Byzantine literary tradition and with society and government. Following this, four sections contain interpretations and translations from the important documents and writings in Byzantine history. The author and editor regards this book as an addition to his *From Alexander to Constantine*, which sought to trace the development of social and political ideas in the Graeco-Roman world down to A.D. 337. In the work under review, the story is carried from A.D. 527 to 1453. While the Byzantine contribution to politics and philosophy was limited by attention to theology, by the somewhat slavish recurrence to the Classical Greek models, and by an unwillingness to explore and to compare political and economic systems other than their own, it was, nevertheless, an interesting and important contribution to Western culture. Indeed, in the refinements offered by Barker, some of the myths about Byzantium are modified or fade away.

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text. Drawing on a monumental German historical scholarship, Professor Hertz interprets the forces and events which have shaped German socio-political ideas and thus enables us to gain a full and mature grasp of the fundamental historical determinants of present-day German political ideas and institutions.

The book is divided into two main sections entitled "The Middle Ages" and "The Reformation," and each section contains well over twenty chapters. It is impossible to give even an outline of the argument and of the development of the "public mind" in the compass of this review. The dominant theme of the story, if there is a single theme, is the tragic failure of the German people in their search for unity within heterogeneity, for consensus within a babel of tongues. The lack of a strong central power, the lack of a fundamental consensus, made impossible the growth of a unified German political system before 1648, the period covered by the present volume. But in the search for this unity Germany developed a veritable treasure-house of regional, class, local, and, last but not least, confessional ideas, all of which must be understood if one is to bring the German public mind into proper relief.

The arrangement of the book is almost entirely historical, but Hertz carefully defines his terms and establishes a conceptual framework which guides him in his analysis throughout the work. Here, too, those political scientists who tend to deprecate "merely historical" studies could learn much about the faithful execution of a rigorously established *modus operandi*. Hertz defines the public mind as "the political and social feelings, opinions and aspirations of the various groups forming the German people with special reference to those which have determined politics" (p. 3). This definition is applied in the light of two sets of conditions: the hierarchical distribution of political power in medieval Europe and the peculiarity of the objects of the political struggle during the centuries before 1648. The struggle between Pope and Emperor, the conflict between of modern America. A democratic theory cannot guide us wisely unless those who interpret it endeavor to work out feasible programs of action, in the light of both the limitations and the possibilities of past and present empirical reality, in order to advance the largely prescriptive values already enshrined in the hearts of Western men. This is James Madison's testament. This is the true genius of American politics.