

REVIEWS

doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. In view of the breakdown of sound social life in the present system, he shows that the Church must concern herself with human affairs in the interest of the supernatural destiny of men. Following the Pope's constant declarations, he emphasizes that Catholic Action is of its nature social action, since the Christian vocation to sonship with God demands a rightly orientated social life. His treatment of this side of the subject will be a corrective for those who hanker after Catholic social action on the scale of a League of Nations; or whose notion of action is confined to political action with platforms and parties; or who, depressed by the exclusion of the Church's teaching authority as an outmoded futility or by the savage attack on it as a vicious delusion, find comfort in a Christianization of the *status quo*.

He explains in detail the Church's plan to train an organized laity spiritually, intellectually and morally in order that through it she may penetrate the masses alienated from her. He indicates the lines along which this organized laity can influence and direct the restoration of a social life compatible with the Christian vocation, and concludes by pointing to the essential preparatory rôle of the Catholic Schools. Conscious that "there is too much of the mass-output character in the modern formation of youth," he clearly sees that unless the children are *formed* before they leave school the chance of proper formation later on is remote. Secularist standards are already steadily forming them to a view of life: they may be turned out not merely ready victims of the widespread lowering of Christian standards; the danger is that they will be allowed to drift out already saturated with a strongly persuasive, because widely and scientifically disseminated, propaganda in favour of standardization at a low level.

This book is a text-book: it indicates general principles and provides a collection of textual quotations not easily obtainable. It is concerned more with general Catholic Action than the specialized apostolate of " 'like by like' without which Catholic Action is mere tampering and compromise." This is a weakness in the book. It will nevertheless be a valuable help towards a more general understanding of a new phase of the Church's work in the world.

CEOLFRID HERON, O.P.

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM. Articles and letters reprinted from the *Spectator*. Edited by H. Wilson Harris. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford; 2/6.)

A symposium against a Whig background. With surprising effectiveness the background renders invisible the one thing which might have formed a basis of discussion: namely the particular kind of social injustice and cultural disintegration under which

BLACKFRIARS

we suffer. The result is almost total unreality, from Dr. Inge's quotation marks when he says, "The Church . . . regards 'riches' as morally dangerous," to the following from John Strachey, "We hold that the essential condition of such equality of opportunity is that everyone should enjoy free and equal access to the means of production"—as if the "means of production" were a kind of slot machine; from Dr. Needham's deification of his own higher aspirations when he quotes, "The Church must die to be born again as the Holy Spirit of a righteous social order," to Canon Barry's exhortation, "Christians . . . cannot remain in the realm of mere ideas nor in the sacristy or the vestry meeting"—towards the conclusion of a pulpit address securely enclosed within the realm of mere ideas, the sacristy and the vestry meeting. Father D'Arcy contributes an article in which he does little more than designate the enemy and proclaim uncompromising resistance to "those who have proudly taken for themselves the name of Antichrist"—a sublimely negative conclusion which solves no present difficulties. The one constructive contribution is that of Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr who summarises three concepts of value:

1. All human actions and ideals, whatever their pretensions, are coloured by interest. It is therefore impossible to secure justice simply by appeals to conscience.

2. . . . The champions of justice must be, on the whole, the poor rather than the intelligent. . . .

3. The most significant social power in modern society inheres in the ownership of a social process as private property. . . . The Marxians may be too dogmatic in their aversion from private property, and may sometimes desire to socialize property which is genuinely private and not social. But the whole of contemporary history validates their thesis that the present system of property automatically makes for injustice; and for a type of injustice which undermines the very foundations of society.

Dr. Niebuhr's is, indeed, the most suggestive as well as the most profound contribution to this book. To follow up one of his hares I suggest for our own theological journalism "The Use of the Dogma of Original Sin in Defence of the Economic Status Quo." It is a dangerous ramp.

BERNARD KELLY.

MISCELLANEOUS

MY WAY OF FAITH. By M. D. Petre. (Dent; 10/6.)

To review this book adequately one would have to discuss the innumerable ideas on all kinds of subjects that are thrown out in its course. The Modernist movement naturally occupies much space in Miss Petre's memoir; and its havoc is evident in the confusion of mind betrayed in the passages on religious issues. An interesting point is the warning one may gather from the