

REVIEWS

CATHOLICISM, PROTESTANTISM, AND CAPITALISM. By Amintore Fanfani. (Sheed & Ward; 6/-.)

The more books written about economics by competent Catholics the better, though to do justice to the special economic problems of to-day needs perhaps something more than competence. Signor Fanfani in any case leaves such problems alone, and his book is a general and more or less detached re-statement of the traditional Catholic attitude towards capitalism. He examines the nature of the "capitalist spirit," the instruments which it employs, and its necessary conflict with the economic precepts of the Church. He shows the extent to which it had developed before the Reformation, and in a very interesting final chapter deals with the teaching of early Protestantism on the subject.

The book is a work of great thoroughness and scholarship, and the views expressed have the support of authorities whom few would presume to question. There are one or two statements however which give food for thought—and I mean thought, not necessarily disagreement. For instance: the well-known Catholic teaching on private property is that the ownership of such property is to be separated from its use. Signor Fanfani claims that not only was the use of property circumscribed in the Middle Ages, but also the "intensity" with which even lawful means might be employed in its acquisition. The capitalist spirit itself is defined as a state of mind in which the only criteria of action are economic.

In the last chapter Max Weber is justly criticized, as are the views of other conventional writers on Protestant economic teaching. Much of the superiority of the Protestant countries in economic matters can be put down to "circumstances extraneous to the religious phenomenon." Protestantism, as such, encouraged the capitalist spirit only "inasmuch as it denied the relation between earthly action and eternal recompense. . . . If all action is to have no reward but its results, the rationalizing of action will remain that of the maximum result." But by no means is the capitalist spirit the product of the Reformers.

In general the book is Catholic, to the extent, almost, of being Pontifical, and the Catholic point of view is stated with so much repetition that the reader is unlikely to forget it. At the same time there is not much in the way of interpretation which is new, and in some respects Signor Fanfani is disappointingly adventurous. There are two serious omissions; little or nothing is said on the great problem of usury, a problem of the utmost importance, perhaps the most important of all in the development of capi-

talism. Also there is practically no mention made about the price level. In his description of pre-capitalist Europe Signor Fanfani never hints that stable prices were taken for granted, just as much as stable weights and measures—let alone does he comment on the advantages of such a system.

No attempt is made to bring the book up to date, or to apply mediaeval economic teaching to modern conditions; no book that made such an attempt could ignore the great changes taking place in America. But this last is perhaps an unfair criticism, and a misunderstanding of the scope of Signor Fanfani's work. The book is not meant as propaganda or to suggest any particular course of action. It is an academic investigation, and for those interested well worth reading.

OXFORD AND ASQUITH.

RELIGION IN SCHOOL AGAIN. By F. H. Drinkwater (Burns Oates & Washbourne; 5/-.)

A collection of Fr. Drinkwater's essays on a variety of subjects all connected with religious education; so packed with valuable matter that it is hard for a reviewer, who wants to convey some idea of its quality, to know where to begin. The book ought to be, not merely read, but meditated on and assimilated by everyone whose business it is to teach the Faith to Catholics, young or old, or to commend it to those who do not grasp it. Let me try, like the film producers, to whet the appetite of readers by giving them a preliminary taste of what awaits them in the book.

Take this illuminating passage on the art of teaching. "There are two ways of using words, two kinds of human language. On the one hand there is the language of science: the language of logical and precise statement, which uses a word to express one meaning only, a meaning accurate and definable. . . . On the other hand there is the language of life and literature, in which words are alive and can suggest more than they say. . . . This language too has its own kind of accuracy and precision—it is a psychological precision, the precision of finding the words that completely express what one has in mind. Nevertheless, because of that very richness, that three-dimensional quality, the words that are made flesh in life and in literature always remain open to misunderstanding. And, of course, this language of life and literature is the language that has power. It is creative. Moreover, this (as far as the records tell us) is the kind of language that Our Lord Himself has invariably used, whether during His life on earth or since then on occasions of His appearances to the Saints."

Or this on "Catholic" history: "The only difference [between the Catholic and the non-Catholic historian] is that the Catholic historian is in possession of a few historical facts unavailable to