

## 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

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remarks on scholasticism of the dangerous effect of a rationalized, materialized Thomism which neglects its essential analogical structure and interprets it as a continuist humanism. But let us leave this sad aspect of the book and accept Miss Petre's assertion that she has weathered three great anti-religious movements and can still say with confidence: "I am within the Fold . . . and nothing would induce me to leave it . . . because I should fear to perish by doing so."

Her account of her family life in early years is most attractive. This ancient Catholic family lived in the nineteenth century with the manners and economy of the eighteenth. In her account Miss Petre includes some shrewd comments on education then and now. It was a period before the examination system and the cult of games had transformed our youth into enduring adolescents and before the psychologist had become a necessary parasite on the diseased victims of industrialism. In our time a boy of fourteen of the middle classes is considered not yet responsible enough to think. In Miss Petre's childhood, after a child had reached the age of reason, somewhere about seven, "the consequences followed, first, that it was capable of appreciating right and wrong; secondly that not only it *ought* to do right, but that, also, it *could*." She adds truly: "It is this word *could* that marks the great distinction between the theories of education in those days and in our own." No doubt there was sometimes rough justice; but the immense significance of this view is that "it was a belief in the unquestionable and inalienable moral *responsibility* of the child. . . ." Schoolmasters might well meditate on that.

Another excellent feature is Miss Petre's defence of aristocracy. "I have always maintained that those who wish to uphold the value and privilege of aristocratic birth must accept one essential consequence—and that is, they cannot go into trade or devote themselves to the creating of money. . . . [Aristocracy] demands, for its survival, a certain pride which is not compatible with an element of servility almost unavoidable in the labour of acquiring money. . . . I strongly object to the attempt, on the part of some members of our class, to have it both ways—to preserve aristocratic dignity, and practice commercial methods." How superb that is! And how Christian! Our Catholic peers might have this punctum for *their* meditation. If Miss Petre had carried her aristocratic independence into her intellectual relations with the Modernists she would have done them considerable good and saved her own mind from subservience to the transient mental fashions of our time.

AELFRIC MANSON, O.P.

**A RUSTIC MORALIST.** By W. R. Inge. (Putnam; 7/6.)

The Devil, according to Dr. Johnson, was the first Whig; perhaps Dr. Inge, as he himself owns, is the last. In politics he