or even in a series of essays it would have been legitimate to ask, just where does the Catholic Church come into the picture? One cannot help regretting that more of its supernatural force is not indicated in these non-committal—perhaps 'irresponsible' is less than just to the real author—letters. Michael Paravane, the Catholic, is a very elusive figure and typical—if at all—of a very small group; on p. 69 Peter catches a glimpse of the limitations of merely natural reasoning and in the style there is an echo of Belloc, but it is only an echo and the original thunder is harmlessly distant. Surely, if those of us who were born into the age of security are at a loss to understand younger lives jerked from crisis to crisis—the Russian Revolution, the Wall Street Crash, Hitler, and the atom bomb—we may be allowed to cultivate our garden: but in the spirit of St Benedict, not of Candide.

EDWARD QUINN.

PHYSICS AND EXPERIENCE. By Bertrand Russell. (Henry Sidgwick lecture; Cambridge, 1946; 1s. 6d.)

Lord Russell's opening paragraph might lead one to hope that he intended to deal with the metaphysical presuppositions of the inductive method used by physical science. But he proceeds to state his problem somewhat as follows. External objects, if it be assumed that metaphysics is essentially correct in its account of them, are very unlike what we perceive. But physics is built on inferences from perception. How can we account for the discrepancy? Russell then discusses perception and the relation of mind to matter, with his usual combination of logical acumen and neglect of metaphysics.

He takes for granted the truths of physics and does not discuss their origin. To resolve his problem it would seem essential, however, to consider first the method of physics, and the kind of knowledge to be expected from such a method. Since the method is quantitative, based on measurement, it can only issue in a mathematical account of nature; it is therefore not surprising that colours, scents and sounds (for example) are omitted. Incidentally the method cannot proceed unless we have independent grounds for believing its basic assumption, namely that there is order in nature; and such grounds can only be metaphysical.

E.F.C.

PUZZLED PEOPLE. By Mass-Observation. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

'A study in popular attitudes to religion, ethics, progress and politics', or, more briefly, 'Well, I don't know'—the representative answer to Mass-Observation's enquiries in a London suburb. The Ethical Union, which sponsored the enquiries, concludes that 'the principles of Christianity and the principles of liberal rationalism have failed to save the masses from desultory living', and hopes that 'transforming the conditions of life and thought . . . by wise and large application of the principles of the Peckham Health Centre, of the Community Centres and Village Colleges, of Town and Country Planning' may bring life to the desolate land surveyed in *Puzzled People*. The commentary is sadder even than the suburb.

Catholics alone come out of this analysis of frustration, fading hopes and muddled ideas with any consistency. The moral must be the will to redeem this lost world; and, as J.O.C. has shown, we must see before we judge and judge before we act. Here is plenty to see—and to understand. An essential book for all who believe in God.

J. A. E.

THE GREAT CHALLENGE. By Louis Fischer. (Jonathan Cape; 18s.)

The title of this interesting political study by an American journalist is perhaps not meant to be misleading; but a first reading might suggest that the challenge to which the author was referring was the threat of Stalin's Russia to the world outside the Soviet orbit. It is indeed refreshing to find one who would consider himself on the left-wing in politics speaking such severe words of condemnation of the actions of Stalin and the men of the Kremlin since they found themselves in a position to blackmail their allies in the war first by the threat, implicit rather than explicit, of making a separate peace with Nazi Germany, then by the open threat to hold up all settlements of peace by the refusal to compromise or cooperate. This, however, is apparently not the meaning Mr Fischer attaches to his title. His meaning is that in order to counteract the influence of Russia the democracies must set their own houses in order and evolve in them the perfect polity so that they may have an unassailable case when confronted with that mighty force. To do this, the democracies must sweep away all remnants of imperialism, monarchism and clericalism, and one or two other things that do not fit in with Mr Fischer's ideology.

To deal adequately with this view of man's social nature would require a whole treatise, but it is necessary to remark that this belief that man has only to be rid of certain ancient institutions in order to be perfect was the primary error of the French revolution and has been shown to be an error by every subsequent revolution. Kings and priests may have been petty tyrants from time to time, but it is sufficiently obvious today that the institutions they represented have been safeguards, not drawbacks, to the essential liberty of men. The Bourbons compare favourably with the Politburo, the Spanish Inquisition with the N.K.V.D.

This is not to deny, however, that much useful information cannot be gained from Mr Fischer's book, and some penetrating criticisms of the policy of the U.S.A. in Europe and of the British Raj in India. The chapter entitled 'Hashyism' is much to be recommended to those whose view of Soviet Russia is still obtained through pink-coloured spectacles.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.