

BLACKFRIARS

disarmament since the last war will certainly serve to mitigate regrets at the recent débâcle at Geneva.

Is there any hope for escape from the present disastrous cycle of quasi-absolute war? Mr. Nickerson thinks there is—in the downfall of liberal democracy and (apparently) of Protestant culture, in the re-union of Christendom (involving decentralisation of the Roman Catholic Church) and the intensification of Christian life. During the period of transition something may be hoped from armed dictators on the Stalin-Mussolini pattern. Which seems absurd—until you have read his book.

V.W.

THE END OF OUR TIME. By Nicholas Berdyaev. (Sheed and Ward; 6/-).

We no longer regard the Middle Ages as a time of bygone hopes and foregone conclusions. The New Age speaks its language. M. Berdyaev, in the first essay of this book, saw the fact and its causes as long ago as 1919. In this and three succeeding essays he traces the growth of Individualism after the Renaissance, its completion by the Enlightenment, and now he proclaims its disappearance in a future of totalitarian States. Man, detached from God and become the centre and measure of all things, has fed upon himself, and modern philosophy, poetry, and art dethrone the Reason and Identity of Man. Individualistic thought has produced barren and envious egalitarian democracies which the struggling modern towns too clearly represent. Man has exchanged the City of God for the Suburb of the Jerry-builder, and he is home-sick for a strong organic society. Central and Eastern Europe, and now the United States (perhaps because of their enormous Slav, Teuton, Latin and Semitic populations) have moved towards dictatorship and a merging of the individual in an organized corporate society—the Corporative or Totalitarian State. M. Berdyaev points out that Russia offered by far the best field for the creation of such a State—democracy would have been a far greater revolution for Russia than a new despotism—but he also shews that Utopias are cheap to-day. People want them and technical means of constraint make them easy for Governments to achieve. The horrors of unfettered competition have produced a longing for Status and 'towards Utopias we are moving.' M. Berdyaev sees the clear alternative between Materialistic Communism or Theocracy, 'Brotherhood in Christ or Comradeship in Antichrist.' He makes specific and interesting prophecies about the Christian State he hopes to see rise over against the materialistic States that are already arising and assigns a noble part to the Church—which is a somewhat vague concep-

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tion to M. Berdyaev, an Orthodox Christian—in the creation of the New Middle Ages. It must present ‘ a full manifestation of the mystery and creation of cosmic life . . . the Church must pass from the period in which the sanctuary has predominated to a period of transfiguration of the cosmic fullness of life.’ Perhaps the Catholic would say that the fullness of life must inhabit the Sanctuary. M. Berdyaev foresees a return to the Church before Constantine and a new creative intellectual Age of the Doctors of the Church. He ends his extremely interesting book with an essay on ‘ The General Line ’ of Soviet Philosophy, which he patiently shows to be ridiculous on its own merits. Dialectical Materialism is a contradiction in terms which Soviet philosophers are always attempting to defend against heresy. Class-war, the expression of autodynamism, has constantly to be reconciled with a materialistic causality. The task is impossible and leads to deliberate obscurantism in philosophy, science and religion. As M. Berdyaev sees, a patient logical victory gained on ground chosen by the adversary is barren when the enemy is blind to it. We must, he says with Joseph de Maistre, oppose revolution, not by a counter-revolution, but by the contrary of a Revolution, by a Crusade against our own imperfectly Christian hearts. We must assail and not assail. Moral indignation at intolerable economic conditions and at the condescending ‘ tutoyer ’ of the noble, has at least removed the latter. This the Christian must emulate in his own society until everyone can ‘ tutoyer ’ one another. The Catholic, perhaps more practical than the Orthodox, will also see the necessity of combating the social-economic machine and the *new anthropological type* common to all the European countries which the Godless Society is producing, by starting *at once* on the task of that ‘ elevation of the Proletariat ’ which *Quadragesimo Anno* calls for and which will cut away the grounds for the creation of a purely materialist State.

P.D.F.

CHRISTIANITY AND CLASS-WAR. By Nicholas Berdyaev. Translated by Donald Attwater. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6.)

A thoughtful and valuable analysis of Marxism in theory and practice and an exposure of its inherent contradictions and limitations. Also a call to Christians to face boldly and intelligently the ugly facts which Marx detected but distorted by attributing to them a quasimetaphysical universality and necessity. Berdyaev hopes for the regeneration of society by a spiritual and intellectual élite economically independent of the Marxian class-categories and the class-war. The Fascists and Hitlerites, who might seem to have already realized many of the author's