

death to the tortures he suffered. He adds that the story had been invented to hoodwink the king and stir up his animosity against the Catholics.

Had it been true, Nicholas could of course not have been beatified.

Fr Gumbley also mentions the case of St Apollonia, who anticipated death by throwing herself into the fire which had been prepared against her refusing to sacrifice to idols. A son of St Philip Neri praised her action in a sermon, but St Pius V told him to re-preach it and explain carefully that such a thing could only be done by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost.



REVIEWS

FROM KARL MARX TO JESUS CHRIST. By Ignace Lepp. (Sheed and Ward; 15s.)

It is hard to overpraise this book. Yet I am afraid many will tend summarily to dismiss it as being yet another book by an ex-Communist. Fr Lepp explains with scholarship, with lucidity, with humour and with humility his pilgrimage from marxism to the priesthood. In this account there is a freshness of style and a depth of feeling which are to be found only in the best autobiographies; I was constantly wishing that the author would tell me more about himself, for he must be a very remarkable person.

Four out of six chapters of *From Karl Marx to Jesus Christ* describe his life in the communist party. As a boy he left his unpleasant *bourgeois* family, never to see them again, to become a full-time member of the young communists; later he graduated into an agent for the Comintern, spending nearly a decade wandering round Europe working for this organization; amongst his adventures, he was condemned to death by the Nazis, but, at the very last minute, was reprieved and sent to Moscow; it is typical of Fr Lepp that he devotes only a page and a half to this episode, and even then does not explain how or why he was set free. He finished his communist career as a lecturer in philosophy at Tiflis University; he appears to be able to speak at least five languages, for he remarks: 'I can say from my own experience that anyone who has really mastered three or four languages can learn others almost as a game.'

The chapter dealing with the dogmas of the marxist faith cannot be

too highly recommended. Perhaps Fr Lepp goes over old ground, but he does this so brilliantly that one is horrifyingly convinced of the attractions that marxism must have for those who desire the 'total truth', yet who do not possess the 'Christian Faith, authentic and understood on an adult level'. He is particularly interesting about Hegel's influence on Marx, and on Marx's application of the hegelian dialectic. This chapter ought to be read and reread by all Catholic students, but especially those studying philosophy in seminaries, for it gives one a startling insight into the mind of the intellectual communist who was also a teacher of his subject.

Always charitable, always honest, always forthright, Fr Lepp has a few words about the Church in France, as it was just before the war. He made a tour of the religious orders soon after his conversion. Of the Dominicans of Juvisy he writes: 'I was invited to spend a few days in this hive of intense intellectual activity, where *La Vie Spirituelle* and *La Vie Intellectuelle* were published. The titles of these periodicals show their scope, but give no real idea of the broadmindedness, the extraordinary gift for entering into every form of anguish that besets man today, which distinguished their editors, both lay and clerical. A third review, *Sept*, filled me with even greater admiration. It, too, was directed by Fr Bernadot, and was probably the most fearless attempt made by the French Catholics to break down the walls of the ghetto behind which so many of them had retreated.' However, speaking of the Dominicans at Saint-Maximin, 'the stronghold of uncompromising thomism. . . . It was all far too reminiscent of communist intellectual authoritarianism; and that, however sugar-coated, and in however good a cause, was henceforth always to be hateful to me.'

At the other extreme Fr Lepp stresses the pitfalls of over-simplification when he states that: 'In a certain famous theological school I have heard some of the professors—models of charity in every other way—over-simplifying, with staggering intellectual dishonesty, the philosophy of such men as Kant and Descartes, just for the fun of making them look ridiculous in the eyes of their young students. Even Catholic theologians and philosophers were referred to contemptuously, if they belonged to some other school of thought. It was not easy to see the difference between such methods and those current in the Soviet Union, which I have described in an earlier chapter.'

Eventually Ignace Lepp entered the *Seminaire Universitaire* of Lyons. Here he was most fortunate in his superior and his instructors. Of his teacher of dogma he writes: 'He did his best to keep to his schedule, but his intellectual—one may say, his forceful—temperament broke through all the restrictions and routine methods imposed by pseudo-tradition. His teaching did not conform much to textbooks, but it had the enormous advantage of giving us an appetite for

theology. . . . As a general rule, the teaching given in seminaries so puts off theological students that very few priests, even among the young intellectuals, ever again open a book on theology.' For the layman, this helps explain the reason why most priests seem so uninterested in one aspect of their vocation; smallness of the sales of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* amongst the clergy of Britain show that this lack of interest in theology is not confined to France.

The anonymous translator has done his or her work skilfully and the book is well produced; I hope Sheed and Ward will soon bring out a cheap edition. The timid will be reassured to know that *From Karl Marx to Jesus Christ* has the *imprimatur*.

E. M. G. BELFIELD

NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION. By Alfred Wikenhauser. Translated by Joseph Cunningham. (Thomas Nelson and Sons; 50s.)

Since its first appearance in 1953, Dr Wikenhauser's *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* has been generally acknowledged as far the best Catholic introduction to the new testament available in any language. This English version is based on the second revised and enlarged edition which was published in 1956. The author conceives of new testament introduction as comprising the following topics:

1. The circumstances in which each book was composed (author, destination, time and place of composition, occasion and purpose, literary form, sources, integrity), that is, the questions which conventionally are dealt with in literary history.

2. How these books came to be collected, i.e. history of the canon (strictly speaking a part of history of dogma).

3. The transmission of the text of these books both in the original texts and in versions, i.e. history of the text.' (p. 2).

The history of the canon is traced most carefully and fully from the earliest sources of revelation in Christianity to the final fixing of the canon in the Latin Church c. A.D. 400. The author treats of the history of the text at particular length because, as he explains, '. . . the finds of papyri and modern textual studies have led to great advances in recent years' (p. xviii). He gives due weight to the contention urged by Fr Boismard to the effect that '. . . in addition to the textual tradition of our mss. there is, or to be more accurate there was another tradition before it, namely the text tradition of the Fathers; this tradition is found over the whole of the ancient Church, but is seldom or never attested by the mss. or versions' (p. 140-141).

In the special introductions the author has been at pains to provide first a penetrating and concise analysis of the content and literary structure of each book. He then records the tradition of the ancient Church concerning it, and assesses its literary and theological charac-