

what had gone before which seems a contradiction of the above statement, *viz.*, 'The hierarchs have received this power to teach, not from the church-people, but from the High Priest, Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of Orders.' To which is added, 'but this teaching finds its limits in the expression of the whole church.'

In *The Church and National Life* Mr. Kartashov gives some interesting explanations of the Church's attitude to the State both in Byzantine times and in the modern Orthodox national states. He also recognizes that times have changed and advocates the forming of extra-territorial unions among the scattered Orthodox Churches in order to oppose the pagan nationalism, and this as a stage towards the Unity of the Christian World.

Mr. Zernov treats of *The Church and the Confessions*. He begins by comparing the Catholic and Protestant conception of the Church, but he sees only the legalistic and counter-Reformation elements in the Catholic Religion. He stresses the corporate conception of the Church which some of our teachers have undervalued, but at the same time he seems to suggest that man is not ultimately responsible for his own salvation. Yet he is quite honest in the criticism of his own Church, and his call on Christians to prepare the way for Reunion by a spirit of repentance and charity is quite Catholic in tone.

To speak of the whole collection of essays we will say frankly that while they are an inspiration to all workers in the cause, we cannot but regret that it was not possible to add some Catholic papers. The writers have often missed the point rather by what they have left unsaid than by what they say. We will conclude with a statement made by Mgr. d'Herbigny at Cambridge in 1923: 'England and the East re-act one upon the other; for while English influence tends to break down Oriental prejudice against the West, the East tends to check and to extinguish the Protestant heresies of England.' Much has happened since 1923!

BEDE WINSLOW, O.S.B.

**THE BURDEN OF BELIEF.** By Ida Fr. Coudenhove. Translated by Conrad M. R. Bonacina. Introduction by Gerald Vann, O.P. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6.)

It is said that twenty thousand copies of *Von der Last Gottes*—the title of the original German of this book—have been sold. It is much to be wished, but hardly to be expected, that this translation will have a correspondingly large sale in English-speaking countries. Unfortunately the complexity of its style and the profundity of its thought are unlikely to recommend it to a wide public.

## REVIEWS

The dialogue-form which the Gräfin Coudenhove adopts is not an easy one to handle, and does not always lend itself to clearness of exposition. But it enables her here, as in her other works, to take a very live and concrete problem (in this case a Catholic's misgivings in reclaiming a lapsed Catholic friend) and to thresh out all its implications without the restrictions imposed by a more logically ordered essay. The problem which the present book sets out to solve is that of our apostolate. 'Why do we Christians bring all this unrest into the world? Why should we think of converting "decent" people . . . far finer specimens of humanity, healthier minded, more genuine, more worthy of esteem than so many of us who believe?'

The discussion inevitably leads far afield: to the purpose of missionary activity, the character of paganism and neo-paganism, the nature of Christianity and of the Church, and, more especially, the inter-relation of nature and grace. It is on this point that the book is most valuable and salutary, but it is just here that the authoress speaks an idiom which the majority of Catholics will find unfamiliar and perplexing. She has assimilated to the full the 'sin-consciousness' of St. Augustine and of Luther (whom, on this point, she quotes with reverence and admiration), and of the neo-Lutheranism of Kierkegaard and Barth. The antithesis of grace and sin-laden nature is thrown into terrifying relief which will shock those accustomed to the 'ethic of the "good will" and the "we all belong to God" attitude.'

She scourges implacably those who make Christianity a facile thing, 'with every modern comfort at moderate prices' (and those who would seem to give official approbation to such a presentation of it), as well as those who would reduce it to no more than a sublimated humanism. 'Since when has Christianity been just a system of morals or a "world-conception" or even a discipline for the building up of personality? . . . It is not merely a matter of "prodigality" and crowning of nature in grace (how could it be, man being what he is?); it is a matter of Redemption. Certainly the former is also true, but only in the second place; first comes the simple and terrible alternative, and the question: Who can be saved?—the question of the mercy of God's grace.'

But if the authoress has learned much from Lutheran thinkers she has also succeeded where they have failed. As in the writings of Fr. Przywara, the truths which have been re-emphasized by the neo-Lutherans are shown in true perspective in their due place in the Catholic dogmatic synthesis. The stress on the dogma of Redemption is balanced (as in St. Augustine) by an acute realization of the implications of the dogma of the

Incarnation and its continuance in the Mystical Body. Despite the sublimity and difficulty of the Christian calling, Christianity can never be an esoteric religion nor the Church a congregation of an *élite*. Here the writer is at her best. She is painfully aware of the sharp contrast between Christian theory and Christian practice, and horrified by the spectacle of contemporary bourgeois Catholicism, the 'prudery, vulgarity, cant, pharisaism, lack of intellectual candour, emotionalism' of a typical devout Catholic, 'Have you ever watched a Christian street-procession, studied it as a procession of physiognomies, and not felt depressed and repelled by the spectacle it offers?' But she sees 'how utterly God threw everything into the hazard when He delivered Himself up to reality, and the truly terrifying, humble, heroic obedience of the Church which dares to take upon herself the burden of humanity just as it is, to deliver herself up to it, to expose herself to a martyrdom of degradation . . . That I call taking the mystery of the Incarnation seriously.'

It is a magnificent book, and if sometimes it would seem to overstate its case, it should for that reason be all the more powerful as a corrective to degenerate misconceptions of our Christian calling and inheritance. It is filled with hard sayings; but those who can receive them would do well to ponder upon them and communicate them in simpler form to others, for its message is for *all*.

Fr. Vann's Introduction shows how much of the argument can be re-cast in vigorous but more homely English.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

THE WAY OF SIMPLICITY. By W. E. Orchard, D.D. (Putnam; 5/-).

The theme of this book is the essential simplicity of the spiritual life in practice, a point which much needs stressing in relief of those many whose subconscious persuasion, anyway, is that on the contrary it is very elaborate and complicated—almost as if God had fitted us with one kind of nature and had then made demands upon us which it would require a quite different one to meet. No doubt, as Dr. Orchard says in his first chapter, this erroneous impression is very largely due to the bewildering wealth of didactic, analytical, expository, and hortatory (not to say minatory) literature on the subject which is almost thrust upon all who begin to take their spiritual life seriously—the wood smothered by the trees. His effort, therefore, is to show (and he succeeds) that in loving and serving God, in aiming at the highest ideal that we can see, we are not doing violence to our nature but are fulfilling it.