

BLACKFRIARS

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE EDUCATION QUESTION is the great problem which faces the new Archbishop of Westminster. How grave is the present situation which faces our schools is shown by Fr. S. J. Goslin in the April CLERGY REVIEW. "No party is openly threatening us with the repeal of hard-won concessions; our agitation does not, as it invariably did in the past, rouse our enemies to fierce and vocal defiance. Our repeated demands for more sympathetic treatment are received in a sinister silence. There can be only one explanation of this changed attitude; the opposition feels secure and is content to let well alone." The provocative tone of the Ramsbotham memorandum confirms misgivings. Fr. Gosling considers that Catholics have to some extent played into the hands of the opposition by "not carrying out the Hadow Report; we have no settled policy regarding it, and the Government, knowing this, feels it can safely ignore us." True, the Hadow Report presents grave difficulties, but "We *must* remain inside the national system. . . . One distinguished educationist light-heartedly looks forward to the time when Catholic priests will 'trudge the streets again' for school money as their predecessors did before them. If future governments refuse our just demands we shall trudge the streets again, but to my mind it is more important and infinitely more praiseworthy to do our trudging with the object of ensuring for our children an equal share of the education we pay for, and of giving the national system a leaven of Christian education of which we shall soon be the only defenders." The prayers of all Catholics will be offered for Mgr. Hinsley in the delicate task which lies before him; a task of the greatest importance to ourselves and the nation at large.

THE APPROACH TO MARX. A BLACKFRIARS reviewer complained recently that Christian thinkers were not paying enough attention to intelligent and constructive criticism of Dialectical Materialism. The task is being undertaken in the pages of ESPRIT. "We have always refused," says the Editor, "to join the anti-Marxist coalition precisely because it is a partisan coalition at the service of class-interests and prejudices. We have constantly affirmed that we shall never

triumph over the errors of Marxism unless we first discover and disentangle the truth which it contains. The 'spiritualism' with which Marx was faced in his early days is *our* enemy even more than it was his—for from our standpoint it is something blasphemous. . . . Instead of joining in anti-Marxist polemics, we should resume his critical work from the beginning, and refashion it in accord with our own perspectives and set on the right lines all that we owe him which is of positive value." With this object in view, M. Marcel Moré contributes to the April number the first instalment of a sympathetic critical study of *Les années d'apprentissage de Karl Marx*. He disposes of misunderstandings to which Marxists and anti-Marxists cling. Authentic Marxism, he shows, like its parent the Hegelian Dialectic, is not strictly determinist; nor is it, in any accepted sense of the word, materialistic: indeed its implications are fundamentally incompatible with materialism. It is, indeed, anti-religious; but, begotten as it was of the "projectionist" criticism of Strauss, Bauer and Feuerbach, it could not have been otherwise. Nevertheless these false anti-religious premisses served, as false premisses often do, as a working hypothesis for Marx which was of indisputable value when applied to economic facts. Marx's great mistake lay in identifying "real" and "social" man—"social" man is man occupied in society to defend his daily bread or to enrich himself with the bread of others. He bears the curse laid on him by God at the gateway of the earthly paradise after his sin. And the most inexorable and cruel laws of economics—those very laws which Marx discovered—are precisely the outcome of that curse." We look forward to the completion of this critical analysis of the early philosophical development of Karl Marx.

THE REASONS FOR UNBELIEF. For some months past LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE has courageously published a series of valuable documents relative to the reasons for unbelief in contemporary France. These documents are the result of systematic inquiry from Catholics in many stations and walks of life with regard to the religious situation in their respective milieux. Many of them have been very outspoken, none of them have been anything short of disquieting. One of the most interesting documents is that from a

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pupil in an Ecole normale supérieure (March 10th). Among the reasons for unbelief he mentions one not often considered:

Les jeunes filles d'abord. . . . *Oui*, les jeunes filles nous ont fait beaucoup de mal; nous en parlons peu, et sans doute parceque notre désillusion est trop profonde. Elles avaient pourtant une si belle mission à remplir auprès de nous: elles n'ont pas compris; au lieu d'éveiller en nous les puissances de rêve, d'approfondir notre vie intérieure, d'affiner et d'adoucir ce qu'il y a de fruste, de hausser ce qu'il y a de noble, de mettre en relief ce qu'il y a de sympathétique dans une âme de vingt ans, elles sont venues à nous maquillées en garçons; nous n'avons plus reconnu notre rêve dans ces regards hardis, ces propos vulgaires, toute cette écœurante camaraderie. Cette déception a pesé sur tout notre jeunesse; nous avons perdu la foi en notre idéal le plus cher; dégoûtés de l'amour et de la famille, ces jeunes ont alors laissé mourir en eux, comme la reste, la vive foi de leur enfance ou l'élan qui allait les mener jusqu'à elle. Ils ont laissé mourir 'tout cela' pour se consoler tant bien que mal avec les films et les amours de pacotille. Et quand l'amour s'est enfui d'une âme de vingt ans, que reste-t-il qui puisse mener à Dieu? Elles portent, ces jeunes filles, une grave responsabilité, elles passent en riant, mais le mal qu'elles font demeure.

In short, "the woman whom thou gavest me . . ." But the sober level-headedness of this student's report demands serious attention, and perhaps this "reason for unbelief" is not confined to France.

NOTANDA. An increasing amount of space is being devoted by the more scientific Catholic theological and philosophical reviews to actual problems of general interest. The March-April number of the *REVUE THOMISTE* contains a brilliant critical study of the work of Nietzsche as "analyst of material causality in psychology and morals" by Gustave Thibon. The essay is a fine example of Thomist constructive criticism and should be neglected by nobody who is looking for a discriminating study of a writer whose thought exercises an almost unparalleled influence on the modern world. *GREGORIANUM*, the polyglot organ of the Gregorian University of Rome, contains a timely article in Latin by Fr. J. Zeiger, S.J., on the relationship of Canon Law to the nature of the Church. He discusses the difficulties of those who feel that the vast and complex legislation of the Church of

to-day is out of harmony with the spiritual religion of Christ and the freedom of the sons of God. He shows historically that the Church's law and spirituality have always flourished simultaneously, and he concludes:

The Church, in developing and perfecting her law, acts both from hard necessity and from supernatural impulse. History confirms that we need never fear that what may happen in civil society—the development of Law into a proud and dangerous autonomy, or its degeneration into a soulless formalism—can happen in the Church. Canon Law, based on the very nature of the Church of Christ, growing out of her inner life, is constantly directed, maintained and checked by her, in much the same way as the members and vital actions of a healthy body grow together and complement one another in perfect harmony.

SCRUPLES. But the Law must be kept in its place. An anonymous writer in *LA VIE SPIRITUELLE* (March) outlines a valuable *Thérapeutique spirituelle du scrupule* which he calls a *solution historique*. He shows that this terrible, paralysing affliction of "scruples," so common among Latin Catholics to-day, was practically unknown to the Church until the sixteenth century and is still unknown in the East. "It would not be far from truth that 'scruples' is a malady which appeared as a result of the 'juridical' treatment introduced by theologians in the direction of the moral life; the price which certain souls had to pay for the exactness which these thinkers brought to morality . . ." Since it is this *jurisme* which is the chief cause of the malady (though there may be also many nervous, pathological and other predisposing causes) it is in vain that a remedy will be sought by the application of rules and regulations which are themselves "juristic." On the other hand, to tell the scrupulous to ignore theological precisions would be "to introduce a hurtful and disastrous dualism, for the most ardent desire of the scrupulous is to return to normality . . . The Law exists, it cannot be ignored; its existence is a blessing. But the Law is one thing; its interpretation is another. We cannot put the clock back; we cannot return to the time when the spiritual life was almost free from canonical exactness . . . But can we not hope to liberate the patient from the stifling cerements of legalism? Can we not plunge him into the full current of the living waters of grace?" The scrupulous, in short, must be restored to the full participa-

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tion of the life of grace imparted in the Eucharist. "But it is precisely this that terrifies them, for they remember that Holy Communion is the Sacrament not of the dead but of the living, and they are ever tormented by a belief that their souls are dead and in a state of mortal sin." The Council of Trent, confirmed by the Codex of Canon Law, sanctions the custom which requires that nobody who is conscious of mortal sin should receive Holy Communion without having first confessed. But this has not been an invariable practice; and it is a disciplinary measure inapplicable to the scrupulous. Their confessions should be as rare, their Communion frequent as possible—accompanied by an act of contrition. They must at all cost be delivered from the atmosphere of legalism.

There are *nuances* in this admirable treatment of the subject which cannot be summarized; it is a refreshing contribution to a difficult and delicate subject which may be recommended to the attention both of confessors and of the scrupulous themselves.

PENGUIN.