

## BLACKFRIARS

Paul also said "the law is holy"; and in a careful analysis of Macmurray's view he finds contradictions and fallacies which are due precisely to the exclusion of obedience and duty. "We cannot escape these dangers by trying to remove the category of obedience altogether. Legalism by itself is the way to bondage. But obedience to the word of God as He confronts us in living personal challenge is the one thing that can set us free" (p. 48). Is there a solution to the paradox? "There is a morality of obedience to an impersonal moral law conceived after the manner of natural laws, and a morality of obedience to a personal God" (p. 21). External imposition, regarded as such, is one thing; assimilated so as to become the inner law of the structure of a being, quite another thing; the first, bondage; the second, freedom; and the Christian life is in the gradual passage from the one to the other. Duty "belongs to the road which Christians must travel, but not to the goal to which they go" (p. 91); for the growth of the spirit is in learning to "love the will of God and not only to obey it" (*ibid.*).

Some Catholic theology, as an article in BLACKFRIARS (*The Spirit Quickeneth*) pointed out, has much for which to reproach itself on this account. The criticism must not be left to those outside the Church, for here as elsewhere it is in part through our lack of self-criticism that so many remain outside. Our danger too is "the reverse of antinomianism; it is pharisaism"; we shall remedy licence, not by "binding upon men burdens too heavy to be borne," but by trying to show that the Christian burden is, as Our Lord said, sweet and light. There is a tendency to regard any attempt to expose the dangers of legalism as an attack upon the idea of law, and thus one of the essentials of Christianity is apt to be obscured precisely in days when it is more than ever urgent to make it plain. This sincere, profound and courageous study of the Christian paradox is, then, of importance quite out of proportion to its modest size; it hits the nail upon the head; and if it has the circulation one would wish for it, it must do immense good.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

## SOCIAL THOUGHT AND ACTION

CATHOLIC SOCIAL ACTION. By A. M. Crofts, O.P. (Alexander Ouseley; 7/6.)

As a text-book based on a wide and intelligent use of the Papal documents concerning Catholic Action, this book is a helpful analysis of the "principles, purpose and practice" of the lay apostolate. In addition to his use of what may be called the Church's "constitutions" for this apostolate, Father Crofts establishes its theological basis, drawing out the implications of the

## REVIEWS

doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. In view of the breakdown of sound social life in the present system, he shows that the Church must concern herself with human affairs in the interest of the supernatural destiny of men. Following the Pope's constant declarations, he emphasizes that Catholic Action is of its nature social action, since the Christian vocation to sonship with God demands a rightly orientated social life. His treatment of this side of the subject will be a corrective for those who hanker after Catholic social action on the scale of a League of Nations; or whose notion of action is confined to political action with platforms and parties; or who, depressed by the exclusion of the Church's teaching authority as an outmoded futility or by the savage attack on it as a vicious delusion, find comfort in a Christianization of the *status quo*.

He explains in detail the Church's plan to train an organized laity spiritually, intellectually and morally in order that through it she may penetrate the masses alienated from her. He indicates the lines along which this organized laity can influence and direct the restoration of a social life compatible with the Christian vocation, and concludes by pointing to the essential preparatory rôle of the Catholic Schools. Conscious that "there is too much of the mass-output character in the modern formation of youth," he clearly sees that unless the children are *formed* before they leave school the chance of proper formation later on is remote. Secularist standards are already steadily forming them to a view of life: they may be turned out not merely ready victims of the widespread lowering of Christian standards; the danger is that they will be allowed to drift out already saturated with a strongly persuasive, because widely and scientifically disseminated, propaganda in favour of standardization at a low level.

This book is a text-book: it indicates general principles and provides a collection of textual quotations not easily obtainable. It is concerned more with general Catholic Action than the specialized apostolate of " 'like by like' without which Catholic Action is mere tampering and compromise." This is a weakness in the book. It will nevertheless be a valuable help towards a more general understanding of a new phase of the Church's work in the world.

CEOLFRID HERON, O.P.

**CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM.** Articles and letters reprinted from the *Spectator*. Edited by H. Wilson Harris. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford; 2/6.)

A symposium against a Whig background. With surprising effectiveness the background renders invisible the one thing which might have formed a basis of discussion: namely the particular kind of social injustice and cultural disintegration under which