

## REVIEWS

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH: Studies by Yves Congar, O.P. Translated by A. V. Littledale. (Geoffrey Chapman; 24s.)

Clarity of expression and simplicity of language are sadly lacking in this work of the learned French Dominican, P. Congar, to whom the theological world is so indebted for his valuable work on divided Christendom. This collection of studies, which is strictly theological and richly positive in its approach, is alas, also very limited in its appeal. It presupposes in its readers a knowledge not only of Latin, Greek, German and French, but also an acquaintance with the current technicalities of modern biblical and patristic scholarship. This is a pity. A lot that P. Congar stands for in the highly specialized world to which he belongs should be made more available to the majority of Catholics who are lacking this highly technical background. If there is one thing we need more than any other in our spiritually starved age it is inspiring utterance of the word of God. The true source of such inspiration, the Holy Ghost, is shown to us in these studies to be the very soul of that social body that we call the Catholic Church. P. Congar states the truth that such inspiration as is required for our supernatural and apostolic lives is necessarily dependent on our vital incorporation into the body which is the Church. This is shown in a masterly presentation of scriptural and traditional evidence which an honest student of the sources would find it difficult to gainsay. But the great message of the faith, the utterly simple solution to all spiritual desolation and barrenness, still remains unemphasized, passed over, taken for granted. This is indeed sad when we bear in mind that for most people the only experience of inspiration is in the sphere of the arts. Music, literature, painting, all continue to produce inspired works of genius. There is no other way open to man except through his fleshly body. And the Word was made flesh. But can we not point to the neglect of art as a vehicle of inspiration as one of our major problems of Catholic education? In the opinion of the present reviewer never has so much good will been expended to so little purpose. It is through the arts and the thought and wisdom that begets them that we are fed and made docile to inspiration. Artistic presentation and philosophy are far from conspicuous in these studies. One turns with relief from the painstaking mass of information here given us in this and kindred works, to the truly enlightened simplicity of a Newman and a St Thomas Aquinas. In both these great men we see both art and philosophy at their best. They were so great because they did not ignore the claims of both art and philosophy in everything they wrote. It would be absurd to suggest that these two disciplines do not

underlie everything that P. Congar writes. But underlying is not enough. The enemies of the Church are not slow to exploit both art and philosophy in their great and effective campaign to win masses of our people to the cause of materialism. Sometimes one feels that not nearly enough attention is being paid to the directives of the supreme pontiffs since Leo XIII began to call the Church back to philosophy and the arts.

MATTHEW RIGNEY, O.P.

THE SON OF MAN. By François Mauriac. (Burns Oates; 12s. 6d.)

'If I were to give a human reason for my fidelity to Christ in this evening of my life, I would call it the quieting of the radical anguish that is in me' (p. 121).

It is then fittingly to the epilogue to these meditations that we must go in order to find the personal solution to the eternal problem—personal to the writer who has let us into his own particular anguish for so many years. A book of meditations should be judged in isolation from any other work of the same author; but to read the meditations of Mauriac without being aware of what has gone before is not possible. This must be the fortune, or misfortune, of one who has laid bare for us the human soul, who has probed the depths and heights of human action and who in the 'evening of his life' wishes to take us by the hand and lead us to peace.

'What I propose as a defence against this form of anguish is another anguish which is generative of peace and joy' (p. 128). Alas! are we to jump out of the frying pan into the fire? Are we still to be yearning for Maria Cross? and are we never to be allowed to stand silently at the foot of the cross with Mary the mother of God?

The new 'anguish' proposed is the 'anguish for another', the anguish of charity, making their suffering ours. This at the present time is piercingly relevant as our dulled emotions, dulled by endless onslaughts from refugees, persecutions, and torture, need resensitizing.

We are taken by Mauriac through the life of Christ, the childhood, the hidden life, the passion and the resurrection, and we see ourselves as the imitators of the persecutors of Christ. In this part, with the undertones of the Algerian torture revelations, we have Mauriac at his best. Pilate wanted to move the crowd to pity with the *Ecce homo*. This was Pilate's effort to avoid the ghastly end by appealing to the humanity of the mob. Today there is no humanity left to which we can appeal. There is the mob, but too hard of heart, and charity is dead.

All sincere writing of this kind carries insights and true vision, and these flashes abound in this book; but how often one is pulled up sharply! The fire that Christ came to pour out on the world seems