

tuted 'the only attempt of which we know to create a workers' movement under Christian inspiration'.

The historical factors which made this hesitancy understandable, especially the coming of complete enfranchisement, are no longer present and yet this vacillation still bedevils our social outlook. Suggesting that one reason why the social Catholics were such a small minority in the French Church was that the clergy had no direct knowledge of the industrial proletariat, being recruited either from bourgeois or peasant stock, Dr Vidler indicates a continuing thread of the problem from the emergence of the movement to the present day. The broad movement could never pass beyond general declarations of principle and localised good works until reactionary illusions and liberal hesitancy were challenged by widely diffused detailed knowledge of the actual conditions to be remedied and the possible means of solution. Bishop von Ketteler, one of the major figures of the movement, appealed in 1869 for the introduction of contemporary labour and welfare studies into the education of the clergy, and the selection of clerics on travelling stipends to carry out field work. Almost a century has passed since then.

ADRIAN CUNNINGHAM

THE ABOLITION OF GOD, Dialectical materialism and Christianity, by Hans-Gerhard Koch; S.C.M. Press; 18s.

This book seeks to refute the anti-religious philosophy and propaganda of atheism, but, unhappily, it is its own little lyrical monument to failure. The fact that it is pedantic in exposition and exudes a sticky substance whenever it gets within range of 'God' is not the point; though it does prompt the question, 'We are supposed to be discussing great and living questions—is something a bit wrong—somewhere?' Its real and rather touching weakness is due to Mr Koch's total failure to enter into *serious argument* concerning the philosophical questions at stake (primacy of matter, social determination of belief, etc.), questions which he poses but only to discard as basically irrelevant, because 'faith, in the New Testament sense, does not mean an intellectual assent to truth' (p. 153). Mr Koch is plainly a straightforward fellow (in his way); if I were a marxist I should be very rude at this point. Not that we are presented with classical modernism; rather, we are offered, by this bourgeois martyr for that which is not true, a more insidious formula true religion = pure revelation = something not *known* to be true. But, to quote Nietzsche at the tender age of twenty-one, what I do not know to be true does not concern me. We return to an old piece of information: faith is not ordinary knowledge, but it is knowledge, in an extreme form. To deny this is to sacrifice either Christianity or honesty.

Nor is there *any* discussion of the political issues at stake: the validity of Marx's historical laws, the viability of his economic prediction, the new culture of socialism. The author prefers to appeal to 'the illumination of faith and the power of love'. Mr Koch is being a bit—shall we say haphazard? Has he not yet realized

that what his better opponents seek is something simpler, something not mentioned in this book, but on which the human psyche *lives*? I refer to truth. Admittedly, the man who eulogizes truth and has not yet thrilled with the recognition of one particular truth (and among these the existence of God is at the top of a very long, arduous and joyful path, as natural theology rightly tells us), is like the man who eulogizes women and has not yet loved one particular woman. But you will not have the second stage till you have committed yourself wholly (if tacitly) to the first (vague and even frigid as it may sound); and most Christians have at least this in common with most 'materialist atheists', that they have not recognized this 'mystery of simplicity' that only truth matters, that every writer in the Bible took this as his starting-point (though a great many stated it explicitly), and that there is no *possibility* of faith (least of all, thank heaven, in 'the modern intellectual climate'), until the step into that (only apparently) wintry world where only truth is considered, has been taken.

Really, of course, no-one wants an 'answer' to dialectical materialism. The situation is much simpler. Having read every page of Marx, Trotsky, *et al.*, having (let us suppose) established a classless society, one would find that the most elementary books (to start with) of the Old Testament (e.g. Proverbs), had something that was new, gay, vital, beautiful, and, on inspection, true. Then the virile, often ironic, frankness of the Old Testament will not miss its mark. To take a low-tension sample, 'a merry heart is the true life of man'—reach for your George Lukacs, Eisenstein, Brecht, and report when you find a comparable sentence. You would find it in at least two modern non-Christian writers, Nietzsche and D. H. Lawrence; and it is probably from these men of joyous insight that the reconstruction of true religion *will* start. From 'Proverbs' to the New Testament is a journey with which History (if not its eulogizers) is rather familiar. But 'love' and 'faith' offered us on a plate of parchment? That tune was played out a very, very long time ago; and every Christian knows that in his heart as well as every atheist.

Incidentally, if I were confronted with a dialectical materialist (they are rare and interesting specimens over here; it's more fashionable, and more questionable, to have lapsed than to be one), I would refer him to Ecclesiasticus 5. 12: 'Be true to your own thought and to the knowledge you have'.

ANTHONY BLACK

A CATHOLIC'S GUIDE TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTION, by C. C. Clump, S.J.; Catholic Social Guild; 6s.

It's as well to be reminded from time to time of the inadequacies of orthodox Catholic social thinking, and Fr Clump's handbook of quotations from the social teaching of six Popes, contrary to its conscious intention, serves this purpose admirably. The book, significantly, is in question-and-answer form: social thinking, according to this kind of outlook, is a matter of dogmatic answers to care-