

RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD. (Allen and Unwin; 7s. 6d.)

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. By Beverley Nichols. (Cape; 12s. 6d.)

One may briefly describe these two books as the many in search of the one, and the one in search of the many. In *Religion in the Modern World* some very distinguished contributors give their opinion on the nature and scope of religion; in *A Pilgrim's Progress* Mr Beverley Nichols describes his examination of the many manifestations of religion to be found in this country.

The contributions to the first work are unequal in value, and the most important are those by Fr Corbishley on mysticism, Dr Thouless on the relation of psychology to religion, and Canon Raven on Christianity and politics. They are valuable because these contributors have carefully defined and limited their subjects and are clear as to what religion is. Viscount Samuel, in the first two chapters, has some sensible things to say, but does not appear to realise the fundamental relation of creature to Creator and spoils his thesis thereby. Sir S. Radhakrishnan makes a noble and familiar appeal for unity between all religions, but he is answered by the Dean of St Paul's in his interesting essay on 'Religion and Religions'. This book would have attained a greater value and unity if it had included a chapter on Communism as the great anti-religion and if those who appeal so much to comprehensiveness and toleration had been obliged to write their contributions in the light of it.

Mr Nichols' book is an enlargement of articles written week by week for a Sunday newspaper. It is unfair to suggest that only a week has been devoted to each religious denomination that he has investigated and thereby to suggest that he has been unfair. But one must judge the value of his investigations by the statements one can control. In his description of the instruction of those seeking admission to the Catholic Church Mr Nichols describes how one will be introduced to a priest who 'talks to you in general terms and when you raise particular objections tells you not to "split hairs".' You then 'probably' make your submission. This revealing statement somewhat reduces the value of the investigation.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

METAPHYSICAL JOURNAL. By Gabriel Marcel, translated by Bernard Wall. (Rockliff; 30s.)

MEN AGAINST HUMANITY. By Gabriel Marcel, translated by G. S. Fraser. (The Harvill Press; 18s.)

Marcel is a thinker whose language is perhaps more difficult than his thought. Of these two books, one, the *Journal*, is philosophy as technical as Marcel is ever likely to write, the other is the application of his thought, as simple as he is ever likely to make it, to the perils of our time. Neither is easy reading and it would require a general survey of his whole

philosophical contribution to make any just appraisal of them. Marcel himself points to the theme of the 'openness' of thought as that upon which his researches converge; he is concerned above all that a man should not erect any screen between himself and 'the innumerable appeals that mount up from reality'. Reality here would appear to be something not looked at, not 'in front of me', but something beyond the opposition of myself and what confronts me. At this point, which is the point of mystery, all becomes elusive; we are to be guided by a certain premonition of truth, the inaccessible source of thinking which directs the phenomenological analyses of such topics of hope, faith, and so forth. The thinker here feels his way about in these mysteries, he does not solve problems. And if he changes mystery into problem he is precisely setting up a screen as the externalised and objectified substitute for that *with* which he must dwell, within which he must give himself to reflection. This is the domain of being.

The *Journal* shows Marcel's early fumbling to such a position, before ever he had formulated the opposition of mystery and problem that has become the centre of his thought. There emerges, too, that sense of 'inter-subjectivity', of the communion with a third party (who must be God), as the condition of that depth which is the character of truth. But this, too, is not clearly formulated, is being felt after in the years covered by the *Journal*. We sense something of that loneliness and yearning for sympathetic understanding that has probably been one of the principal motives of Marcel's thought. In a word, the *Journal* is the fascinating, and very difficult, revelation of a gradually maturing view. Perhaps it also reveals the weaknesses of the final view—its insufficient foundation on the shifting sand of premonitory 'hunches'.

The slighter book, *Men Against Humanity*, is a protest, full of significant and useful insights, of the reflective spirit thus developed against the cruelty and *ersatz* fictions of our technical civilisation. Marcel discovers in the most accepted practices and instruments of our day techniques of degradation, potential in our Western civilisation, actualised in totalitarian practice, and traces them to the substitution of abstraction and objectification for the proper state of openness to mystery. There is much to be learned from these pages even by those who may disagree philosophically with his existentialism or politically with his conservatism.

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.