between "who" and "follow" to make the sense of the sentence clearer.

On the whole, however, The Church and Birth Control is a clear, balanced and pastorally sensitive statement of the position of the magisterium on family planning and population policy. It is a book which mature Catholic Christians, especially pastoral agents, would do well to read and study.

Romeo J. Intengan, S.J.


The first part of this book (pp. 1-47) proposes to expound "the historical maturation and present expressions of the Church's social teaching." This it does by enumerating individuals and writings from the patristic era onward in which popes and ecclesiastical writers expressed themselves on "what a human society should be in the light of the Gospel and right reason" (p. 44). The purpose is to demonstrate that the Church has always had a social doctrine and to refute those who "because of ideological premises" have criticized the idea of "social doctrine" — no doubt alluding to the late Fr. M. D. Chenu, O.P., in his book La "doctrine sociale" de l'Eglise comme idéologie.

Though there are many points of interest in the survey, the whole is marked by a triumphalism which does not convince. Though it is true, as Pope John Paul II asserts in Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, that the social teaching of the Church — as it now exists — is not an ideology but part of moral theology, historically it is undeniable that Church social teaching was used ideologically in the period before John XXIII. Indeed, Carrier's own insistence, using the term of Pius XI, that there is a "true Catholic social science" seems to be a prolongation of that ideologization, from which subsequent popes have distanced themselves.

The second part of the book consists of a selection of papal and conciliar documents "in which the official Church declares how to understand the originality of its social doctrine" (p. 51; italics of the author). It is not intended, the author insists, to offer a summary or synthesis of the Church's social teaching. The first three selections, taken from Leo XIII's political encyclicals, show how the early papal teachings
were part of a project, or dream (the term is mine), to restore a "Christian civilization." It seems that Carrier hesitates to point out the futility of that project, which did so much to hamper the effectiveness of papal social teaching, though in his introduction (p. 52) he has already noted that it was abandoned after Pius XII.

This apologetic purpose which animates the entire book no doubt explains why not only are Pius X’s encyclicals in which he gave a minimalist interpretation to Rerum Novarum not included, but not the least reference is made to the various efforts of Pius X tending to control and clericalize all Catholic activity, and above all social action. Similarly, no mention is made of the corporatism of Pius XI in Quadragesimo Anno and the comfort given to the clerico-fascist regimes of Portugal, Austria, and Spain by this aberration, not to speak of the wasted efforts of socially conscious Catholics in democratic countries to reconcile the encyclical’s proposals on this point with their democratic labor movements.

Though the selections in the rest of the book are generally unexceptionable, and as the book goes on there is less commentary and more of the magisterial texts, it is hard to see what purpose the book serves. The author specifically rejects the purpose of presenting a synthesis of Church social teaching, yet apparently makes his selections in view of a certain interpretation of the continuity of that teaching with the entire history of the Church. Thus, in spite of distinctions made at certain points, triumphalism pervades the entire book, and numerous statements are made about the Church’s uninterrupted social concern, e.g., on the question of slavery, which will not stand up to any basic knowledge of the Church’s history. There are enough indications that the author is aware of the unspoken facts which go contrary to his general thrust, but he chooses to leave them aside.

It seems to this reviewer that this type of approach, though no doubt it finds favor in certain circles, is unlikely to promote a solid appreciation of the Church’s social teaching, either inside or outside the Church. I would certainly maintain, as I have done elsewhere, that there is a continuity in the social teaching of the Church, and that such values as human dignity have been at the basis of all this teaching. But the understanding of the implications of this and other important human values has been a gradual and progressive one, with not a few errors and missteps. That is the way that all doctrine develops in the Church, and especially would one expect it to be so of her social teaching, where so many contingent and changing factors are involved. Carrier recognizes the fact of contingency and of development, but principally explains development as coming “from a process of explicating [sic] more
clearly what was first affirmed in a general way” (italics of the author; p. 56). No doubt some development is due to such a process of explicitation, but certainly many theologians would balk at limiting such development to mere explicitation of the implicit. For this reviewer, the major flaw in this book is the compulsion to attribute to the whole of Church social teaching what in fact was only achieved with Vatican II. This compulsion is in continual tension with Carrier’s own recognition of the real change which took place, one which has been repeatedly pointed out by theologians, historians, and social scientists, not all of whom can be dismissed as being motivated by ideological biases.

If it is perhaps expecting too much to think that encyclicals should point out the deficiencies or errors of their predecessors, one could expect more from a compilation such as this, even if it comes out under official auspices. Carrier is also aware of the contingent elements in Church social teaching, and in certain parts of the book, acknowledges them, as he likewise points out the shift in method which takes place beginning with Vatican II, but his stated purpose of showing a unity in the teaching of all the popes, seems to this reviewer to lead to considerable confusion, not to say open contradictions.

John N. Schumacher, S.J.


Donal Dorr intends this book (which we shall call Social Justice Agenda for brevity) to fulfill two main aims. It seeks to provide a general and simple introduction to the converging developments in the spirituality, theology and teaching of the mainline Christian Churches on social issues over the past generation. It also suggests the kind of action that these Christian Churches should undertake in relation to social issues. By mainline Christian Churches Dorr means the Catholic Christian Church and the member Churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The emphasis in this book is on the role that the institutional Church can play in responding to social justice and peace issues. It is meant to complement Dorr’s earlier book Integral Spirituality, in which the concern was what individual Christians and small committed groups of Christians could do to respond to the demands of social justice and