

will be enough. I would like to have seen the Young Fabians tackling such questions as whether our existing institutions—Parliament, trade unions, local government and the like—can ever be expected to cope with the complex problems of modern British society, and if not, what revolutionary new structure should replace them and how should such a change be accomplished with the least painful disruption.

I suppose most readers of this book will not exactly recoil in surprise at the fact that no essay is devoted to the Christian Church. Yet in these columns at least one is inclined to ask what place there could possibly be for a non-democratic Church in a democratic State. Is 'more power to the people' a cry that could with profit be heeded even in ecclesiastical government?  
GEOFFREY PONTON

CONJECTURES OF A GUILTY BYSTANDER. Thomas Merton. *Burns and Oates*, London, 1967. 328 pp. 42s.

In the interval since that rather noisy book *Elected Silence* we have grown so used to being shouted at, bullied and cajoled by spiritual mentors of one complexion or another that a modestly companionable book to assuage our confusions comes as something of a treat. One had already been saying to oneself in the early pages of Fr Merton's new volume that here was something that might fulfill some of the therapeutic functions of the journals and stories of Julian Green, when it emerged that Green was indeed explicitly somewhere in the background. This is only fitting in the case of someone who now recognizes his personal involvement in the difficult ecumenical task of bringing Europe and America together. 'To identify myself completely with this country is like accepting the fact of a hidden Jewish grandfather in Nazi Germany. My European background gives me a protective colouring, no doubt. I am, as it were, a Jew with blond hair and blue eyes. But no, I remain a citizen of a hated nation, and no excuses will serve. I know for a fact that this does have some influence on the way my books are received in some places in Europe.' Neither here, nor in the other references to this recurrent theme, has Fr Merton yet achieved the concision and affectionate, yet detached, penetration that Green brings to these same matters seen in reverse. Meanwhile, since he aspires to this, it may yet become evident that some contribution to mutual understanding was indeed part of that 'eschatological secret' towards which, like Mother Julian of Norwich, he feels himself to be orientated. It is *à propos* of something ecumenical in the more conventional sense of that word that he says: We must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.

There is a lot of pleasant and even memorable writing in this book, which disclaims to be a sequel to the *Sign of Jonas* and is, in fact, less of a

journal than a series of reflections more like those which made up *No man is an island*, a book which wears as well as anything Fr Merton has written. It vindicates the notion that 'true solitude is deeply aware of the world's needs. It does not hold the world at arm's length.' Those thoughts which refer more or less directly to monastic life are on the whole brief and fairly widely dispersed, but those who know it from the inside will recognize their often devastating justice. For the rest there are reflections of greater or less profundity that grow out of commerce with a number of minds of contemporary interest and importance. But Fr Merton keeps his best wine until the last. What he has to say about the true nature of freedom, which begins at p. 298, sparked off by an ingenious confrontation between Anselm and Sartre, desperately needs to be said in a way that can be heard. It would be frivolous to worry too much about the accuracy with which the ideas of the two writers, out of whom the discussion develops, are represented—though it cannot be too wide of the mark. There is a truth here which was once better understood and needs reasserting. 'For Anselm, it is clear that God's will is not a force that presses down on the man from the outside. It works on man from within himself and from within the ontological core of his own freedom. Made free, in the image of God, man's freedom contains in itself a demand for infinite freedom which can be met only by perfect union with the freedom of God, not only as an external norm but as the source of our own love. Here philosophical notions of freedom necessarily break down and the perfect freedom of the Christian can be accounted for only by the indwelling Holy Spirit.' Although the connexion is not explicitly made, Fr Merton goes on, as if by a natural instinct, to consider the obverse of all this in the fate-bound world in which more and more people live. 'Note',

he writes on p. 303, 'we live in a society in which for many people the values I have just mentioned are for the most part completely inaccessible.' How many, either within the Church or outside it, will attend to the considerations which are here trying to find a voice?

Earlier in the book Fr Merton has said, 'When the doors are closed in one's own country, then one goes everywhere. This is the condition of true universality. But if one penetrates everywhere, one still only reaches a few.'

AELED SQUIRE, O.P.

### **ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED THEOLOGICAL STUDY, JERUSALEM**

The proposal to establish an Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Study at Jerusalem has already been given publicity in the world press. The Institute intends to make full use of the scholarly resources of the different Christian traditions in dealing with the theological problems of our time.

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