

think of such groups as institutionalized sects, which has quite new implications for understanding membership behaviour and responses of the wider society to such groups. It serves to remind us of course that simple models which treat groups as progressing from sect to church or denomination will not do.

But the most fascinating part of the book for me was the chapter dealing with attitudes towards the modern world—religion in relation to social science. Typically one thinks of sociology as a product of the enlightenment, reacting against dogmatic presuppositions and proclaiming its own scientific status over and against religion. Robertson here reminds us that various styles of sociology co-exist which have either implicitly or explicitly (in the case, say, of Marxist philosophical anthropology) an image of man. And here our attention is

drawn, albeit briefly, to the varying perspectives of Durkheim, Parsons, Berger, Luckmann and Dahrendorf.

At times, it is true, the themes and issues in the book are compressed so that we have allusions and illustrations rather than sustained argument. Robertson has nonetheless satisfied his own criterion that sociologists who work in this field should familiarize themselves with the work of theologians and philosophers of religion. And there is a certain kind of humility when he recognizes that since sociology is itself a cultural product, the sociologist should himself analyse, as an act of critical self-reflection, the sociological perspectives which have informed the approaches taken to the study of religion. In sum, this is a book which, for many reasons, one will be glad to recommend to students for whom it was primarily written.

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THE IDEA OF THE CITY IN ROMAN THOUGHT, by Lidia Storoni Mazzolani. *Hollis and Carter*, London, Sydney, Toronto, 1970. 289 pp. £2.25 (45s.).

Civilization takes its name, and in the so-called Western world, its substance, from the Greek city. The Greek invention was exported on a vast scale over the Hellenistic world; Rome, stepping into the Hellenistic inheritance through conquest, spread its urban institutions and culture—more or less thinly—over much of Europe. Christianity was an urban grouping from almost its earliest days, and soon espoused the urban values of the Graeco-Roman world. It allied itself with the urban culture of the Roman bourgeoisie, which had failed to assimilate the inarticulate, the barbarian, the *paganus*. After the collapse of imperial administration in the Western provinces of the Empire, it was the network of an urban Christian episcopate that kept Roman forms of life in being where these survived.

In multifarious ways the city could be said to be the central theme of European—though not only of European—history. Great historians from Fustel de Coulanges and Rostovtzeff to the late A. H. M. Jones have written about it and about its place in the ancient world and in its consciousness. Mrs Mazzolani has chosen a great theme for a first book (the book has been awarded an Italian prize for a first book); too great a theme, let it

be said at once, for even a skilled journalist, widely read, perceptive and intelligent. As far as can be judged from the very readable translation, Mrs Mazzolani is a gifted writer. Her book contains much of interest and can be stimulating. Her chapters on the extension of Roman citizenship and the problems raised by it, short as they are, contain much that is illuminating. But she escapes too readily into the ideal, spiritual city which she sees at the end of the development she is describing: the City which Saint Augustine (she argues) salvaged from the ruins of the classical world. The real problems, those which the work of Rostovtzeff has placed at the centre of both ancient and medieval history, concern the fundamental relationships of an urban culture to that of the underprivileged masses of the countryside. Although there is much 'straight' history in Mrs Mazzolani's book, there is a gulf between it and the speculations about the 'city' which her treatment does little to bridge. This is a stimulating book; if it succeeds in encouraging its readers to return to Fustel de Coulanges or Rostovtzeff and the more recent historians who have tried to come to grips with this central problem of the ancient world, it will have deserved its prize.

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