

## REVIEWS

MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN: The Amsterdam Assembly Series. Vol. I, *The Universal Church in God's Design*; Vol II, *The Church's Witness to God's Design*; Vol. III, *The Church and the Disorder of Society*; Vol. IV, *The Church and the International Disorder*. (S.C.M. Press; 12s. 6d. each volume.)

These studies prepared under the auspices of the World Council of Churches make interesting reading, especially those which are concerned with dogmatic issues and the problems raised, in Dr Niebuhr's phrase, by the unwillingness of man to re-construct justice under conditions which a technical civilisation has created. A Catholic, interested in the vital task of making contact with a world dominated by post-Christian mythologies and functioning according to the dictates of a collectivist morality, will find in the second and third volumes valuable interpretations of the contemporary cultural crisis. Apart from a few reservations, a Catholic can accept—and accept with joy and humility—the various contributions which interpret the modern world 'as lacking a spiritual centre' towards which all reality can be orientated.

It is, however, at this point that the profound dogmatic problem arises. However warmly we may welcome the sincerity and the honesty involved in the ecumenical movement, an attitude of un-critical enthusiasm only serves to obscure the true nature of the fundamental difficulty which underlies the relationship of Catholic and non-Catholic.

What of the Church, the Bride of Christ? Dr Visser t'Hooft, in his contribution, describes the 'World Council' as a 'method', a 'foretaste', 'a means to manifest the unity of the Church'. The World Council, which claims no authority of itself, is, then, regarded as a symbol of something realisable, something present in the Spirit and of decisive importance in terms of the will of Christ—yet future. This futurity or ideality of the visible unity of the Body of Christ presents issues, which it must be said are squarely faced in the introductory studies to the first volume. All these show a refreshing realisation of the prime importance of the Scriptural and dogmatic interpretation of the mind of Christ and of the significance of the key themes of 'communion', 'kingdom', 'temple' and 'body'. Nothing strikes a Catholic more forcibly than the movement of return to traditional views which has been such a feature in Protestant theological thought in the last thirty years. Compare for instance the views of the men of Stockholm with those of their successors at Amsterdam.

This is the positive side; but beyond the area of general interpretation there lies the concrete—and the problem of identification. It is at this point—with one important exception—that the studies assume a somewhat unreal character. We are told that there is 'no agreed Christian interpretation', that the theology of the Church

has yet to be worked out, 'that there is unity not uniformity' or 'unity in diversity', but the unity that is left when the diversities are accounted for is but a shadow of a shade—and the shade is Rome.

A well-meaning vagueness gives rise to a sort of dogmatic fog in which these good men see will-o-the-wisps—'Una Sancta' or the 'Great Church'—which are always just out of reach, but if you write in capital letters it makes the phantom appear more substantial.

It is in terms of this very point that Dr Barth's contribution stands out for he knows quite well what he means by the Church: it is the 'living' congregation 'chosen' by Christ in the Spirit as a witness to his victory. The criterion of unity is the 'event' of 'gathering', a criterion which can be applied to either the ordinary congregation or the synodical or special one.

This at least is clear, and its influence can be seen in all the Reformed contributions, but a careful study of the less logical studies serves to show that it is an illusory clarity. Bishop Aulen, Dr Craig and Fr Florovsky draw attention to blocks of Scriptural data which will not fit into the Procrustean theology of Dr Barth.

From the newspaper point of view the high spot of Amsterdam was the clash of opinion between Mr Dulles and Dr Hromadka. Each states his case in the fourth volume. Mr Dulles presents a clear, fair and slightly tedious account of Christian responsibility in terms of a modified liberalism, while Dr Hromadka argues that the 'new historical situation' which has arisen in Eastern Europe demands a recasting of method and theory. It must not be thought that Dr Hromadka is a mere tool of the Soviet. His essay shows him to be a sincere and not unintelligent thinker. He has seen, as Mr Dulles has not, that a new culture form has arisen, and that the old tradition is disintegrating—the criticism which can with justice be levelled against him is one of romantic naiveté: a mood which the singularly unromantic theory and practice of the Marxist seems to engender in the Western trained intellectual.

In spite, however, of the critical attitude they are forced to adopt on many points, Catholics are at one with the men of Amsterdam in their realisation that Christ alone can feed the people and that it is in him alone that the spiritual centre is found. That Christendom is being judged for failure and omission is a profound truth. The Providence of God is a judgment, and if we have forgotten, in our pre-occupation with secular or secondary issues, the new man of the Industrial Revolution, we are judged in that he has inherited the earth and the mess of pottage has been snatched from our hands. But it is a judgment that bears with it redemption for willy-nilly over half Europe the Church is left with nothing—nothing save the faith of the apostles and the words of Christ. It is futile to waste time on bewailing the past, the events of history are irrevocable and the present that is upon us is moulded after their form.

But if the past is our sin and the present his judgment—the future lies in his mercy—if we but have faith.

In the face of a world that is lost—and angry because it is lost—the great Church of Rome extends a hand to the men of Amsterdam and says 'let us be about our Father's business'.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE STRUCTURE OF CAROLINE MORAL THEOLOGY. An Investigation of Principles. By H. R. McAdoo, Ph.D. (Longmans; 12s. 6d.)

Though at first the Counter-Reformation gave martyrs to this country and centuries later fostered the last John Bulls, it received comparatively little back in return; Crashaw, Dryden, and Clifford of the Cabal. It is interesting to speculate on what would have happened had the English-speaking peoples remained Catholic; if the Pilgrim Fathers had been tertiaries and the East India Company a guild, if Oliver Cromwell had forestalled Sobieski and the Whigs exerted a stronger pull in the Curia than the Bourbons. Certainly the domestic atmosphere within the Church would have been different, and it is possible that theological education has suffered from the absence of the English spirit, a peculiar mingling of modesty and earnestness, of equity and feeling for a friendly law, of historical sense and ethical idealism.

Dr McAdoo writes with pride about an impressive school of divines who were the continuators—almost, he would have us think, the sole survivors—of the high Thomist tradition in a world of casuists preoccupied with the forensic conditions of sin. His wit and reverence grace his subject, and he is rightly disposed to be critical of those guides within his own communion who neglect their heritage of a theology free from formalism, quietism, or sentimentality, in order to go borrowing elements, and those not always the most authentic, from foreign systems. This much may be said in passing, that the cause of reunion is better served when both sides in the dialogue talk from their best and most typical. Mutual understanding is to be sought high up in the hills, not in the lower reaches where local loyalties and group-psychologies divide the field.

Consequently this study is heartily recommended, and not merely to those who should cultivate piety towards men of their own household. Hooker's debt is well known, but it may come as a surprise how freely the *Summa Theologica* was worked by others. Jeremy Taylor's originality is emphasised, but at two points his dependence on St Thomas is greater perhaps than the author appears to allow for: the gravity of sinful habits should be related to the teaching in the *Summa* on *malitia*; and even in the vexed question of venial sin, where the Carolines often give the impression of reacting against a rather mean and trivial treatment of sin more to the credit of their heart than of their head, there are echoes of St Thomas's careful distinction between what forbids the activity and what strikes at the very root of charity.