

youth, drawing its basic principles from rural Catholic Action, has been able to take the measure of the change now in progress. The result has been determination to reject the past, resolute adoption of what is progressive and effort to utilise it in the service of man. A whole generation is stamped with the effects of this new formation and they are in actual fact taking the key positions in professional organizations and beginning to influence the political life of the country. It is of this upsurge of youth, fair promise of the future, that Gordon Wright gives

a description in the last part of his book, a description well rounded off by several village monographs.

*Rural Revolution in France* owes much to the deep penetration and great fidelity which have enabled the author to grasp and portray the complex evolutions of a rural population still in a state of flux.

Pierre Viau

(translated from the French by Sr. M.

Magdalene, O.P.)

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN by A. M. Dubarle, O.P. : *Geoffrey Chapman, 25s.*

We accept quite easily the idea of collective guilt, indeed we sometimes exaggerate it. It is not unknown to speak as if the whole German race were personally responsible for the horrors of Auschwitz, instead of merely bearing a collective shame in their generation by 'being there' in a corrupt environment. This solidarity in sin is a reality which leaves its scars on succeeding generations. Even the unborn child may be affected by the defective behaviour it experiences, and it grows up in conditions which render difficult a trusting approach to God as Father. Such a condition we may call in Biblical terms 'The Sin of the World'. Fr Dubarle asks in this book whether we may not interpret similarly the doctrine of Original Sin. To be sure he asks this question prudently. 'It is not always easy', he says, 'to discover at the outset the remote consequences of a new idea, nor is it easy to form a complete picture of all the internal connections of revealed truths and so estimate the repercussions of a denial that may at first sight seem unobjectionable'.

Whether this solution is acceptable or not, we can surely be grateful to the author for his careful handling of the texts, and for the light his examination throws upon the doctrine itself. Much in our popular teaching is clearly unsatisfactory. We tend very easily to unload our guilt upon Adam, as if subsequent generations could do nothing to modify the total picture for better

or worse. We pass then from this great sinner, whose first state we depict in frankly mythical terms, via an explicit promise to the coming of the Saviour Himself. This is a foreshortening of view which makes nonsense of Holy Writ. The narrative of Genesis is discreet on the early condition of Adam, nor does the Bible attribute to sin every evil that we suffer. It is therefore illegitimate to abstract from all present ills in order to construct an historically valid picture of the original state of our first parents, as if God's purpose in our present state were purely punitive.

As might be expected, the author is on the side of those who see in the Genesis narrative a mental reconstruction, rather than an 'historical tradition' or special revelation. He asks the important question, so often raised in recent discussion, as to whether this reconstruction is intended to affirm the strict unity of the sin originally breaking a harmonious balance which could never again be restored. He prefers to see in original sin the continually perpetuated perversion of humanity, in which sins new are conditioned more or less by the preceding sins and carry on the existing disorder. Nothing is thereby denied of man's universal need of salvation, any more than of the need of purification of a tainted river, whether its tainted source is one or multiple.

C. H. Southwood