

when people are studied instead of theories.

Even where the dictates of conscience differ from age to age and from man to man, they are still dictates of conscience. Error in judgement does not always rob the conscientious judgement of its value and authority. It would be all too easy to overstate this, but in a world where certainty too frequently is drowned in a sea of conflicting opinion, it is worth noting that St Thomas was able to show how the sting is taken out of human error in the daily business of human living without condoning it. He was a theologian, one whose function it is to state in human terms the truths of the love and mercy of God.

In his closing paragraph Fr Columba Ryan raises the second great issue: the relationship

between the natural law and the teaching authority of the Church. He very tentatively suggests that 'when the Church invokes the natural law, it is not by way of appeal so much as by way of affirmation'. Even in an atmosphere where the nature and function of infallibility is such an open question, this seems unduly cautious. But to assert it roundly would not close the question. When has the Church made such affirmations, and about what? Canon Drinkwater in *Birth Control and the Natural Law* (Burns and Oates), with a very different audience in mind, discusses one of them, 'and shows how a change in the Church's position would be in harmony with a general development of doctrine that is already taking place'.

MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY. Ed. Michael de la Bedoyere. *Constable*, 21s.

During the time in which I have been, with disgraceful slowness, addressing myself to the task of writing a review of this book, I have been conscientiously refraining from reading anyone else's reviews. But I understand from various conversational sources that, since I am strongly averse to finding myself a target for tedious correspondence, I shall be well advised to say nothing whatever of the first and third essays.

I now have to acknowledge, rather weakly, that I am not going to try to talk about all the rest either. An assembly of unrelated individual utterances cannot be reviewed as a whole, and I do not see that each of these items merits a separate review. The most I can do is to give some reactions and comments. In my opinion, then, the allotting of male and female roles in every department of life as done here by Bernardine Bishop, is not the best way of considering human relationships. Nor am I able to understand Mr Westow's enthusiasm over the (inevitably) platitudinous message of the Pope to the United Nations. Daniel Callahan is, as one would expect, straightforwardly informative and illuminating about American Catholic liberals, and Archbishop Roberts, equally predictably, warm and sympathetic on the subject of a mixed but genuinely Christian marriage. The two essays which I found very depressing, while entirely respectable, were those of Mr Brech and Mr Watkin.

Mr Brech's is a scheme for totally integrating the Church into the affluent capitalist society so that its interests shall be her interests and her values conformed to its values. This is certainly

not his only concern: he is, for instance, admirably concerned with responsible lay participation in the normal administration of the affairs of the People of God. But I remain disappointed that an exceptionally competent Christian economist, who might be helping us to find a way out of our present prison of idealised and systematised economic selfishness and towards a fulfilment of our primary obligation towards the third world, should instead be planning for the Church, as an institution, to repeat, with the greatest possible efficiency, the mistake and betrayal of identifying herself with the unjust social structures which she should be challenging with the Gospel and shattering with the impact of the new creation.

As for Mr Watkin, it would be an impertinence on my part to try to sum up and dismiss his essay. It contains innumerable insights for which I am grateful. It also assumes, it seems to me, an extreme dualism which I deplore. It bewilders me that anyone can seriously think that the Church of the apostles and the immediately following centuries simply wasn't ever doing, in her liturgy, the things that truly expressed her true nature (I find it relatively easy to see that she might subsequently lose and corrupt that truly appropriate expression of herself); when Mr Watkin says that 'only a liturgical language stylised and archaic is fitted to suggest the numinous', I can only suppose that he feels the apostles should have given the early Church a Hebrew liturgy. But I truly do not want to quarrel. I only want to ask Mr Watkin to try to believe that there are people

who, when seeking no mere 'hearty fellowship' but precisely the depths of the divine mystery given us in Christ, find it most profoundly in a liturgy which affirms itself as the Lord's Supper and the Breaking of the Bread; something which

does not strive to be as far removed as can possibly be managed from that brotherly meal which was the very form in which Christ gave us his eucharist.

C. HASTINGS

THE MIND OF DANTE. Ed. U. Limentani. *C.U.P.* (1965), pp. 200, 25s.

These seven lectures were given in the Lent term at Cambridge by two Italians and five Englishmen, all but one members of the Department of Italian, to mark the centenary of Dante's birth, and to 'serve as an introduction to his works and an interpretation of his art and ideas'. This form of introduction is more successful than the usual pattern of political and social background and of biography (as in Professor T. G. Bergin's *Approach to Dante*, the Bodley Head, London (1965), pp. 326, 35/-), because it is also an interpretation, and, without repeating the meagre and well-known biographical facts, reports on recent research and puts forward new ideas. The first essay, however, by Professor Natalino Sapegno of Rome, author of a well-known commentary (1955-6-7), is an exception since he seems still stuck in Croce and De Sanctis though anxious to move on from them, and talks of the 'genesis' of the *Comedy* in the manner of Vossler. Dr Philip McNair attempts the difficult task of saying something new about the 'poetry of the Comedy' by putting a sharper edge on the question of allegory and symbolism. But the acceptance of the Letter to Cangrande as genuine seems to me to make clarity on this question impossible. Dr McNair himself refutes what the Letter says of Dante as 'Florentino natione, non moribus,' and does not explain why Dante so insists on the literal truth of the details, 'che io vidi'. On the Crocean problems of 'structure' he argues well that a structural element such as the Mount of Purgatory is a poetic image, an original creation within a Hereafter that Dante did not invent. The theatre of Dante's dramas is as much a work of imagination as the dramas themselves, and essential to their interpretation.

Fr Kenelm Foster, O.P., handles religion and philosophy in Dante with his customary skill and delicacy of touch. Dante's Christian faith never wavered, but he had philosophical difficulties about the competence of reason, creation *ex nihilo*, the relation of matter to God, the limits of freewill, the salvation of the unbaptized. His

final answers in the *Comedy* are orthodox, yet not dictated by authority, but thought out independently – quite independently of St Thomas, for instance. Fr Foster rightly stresses the extraordinary enthusiasm that Dante shows in the *Convivio*, a 'passionate intuitive experience' of philosophy and 'so potentially poetic'. Dante's problem, and ours, is to relate his secular concerns, especially as focused in the *Monarchy*, for this life to his religion. I would dispute some of Fr Foster's formulations, but with the diffidence of an amateur in such a field, and as a learner from him.

Dr Patrick Boyde's lecture on 'Dante's Lyric Poetry' sharpens the appetite for his (and Fr Foster's) forthcoming commentary on the *Rime*. His characterization of the *Vita Nuova* as a book of poetry, superbly constructed, as in fact fulfilling the promise of an unprecedented poem for Beatrice in its last chapter, is excellent, but I am not convinced as he is by De Robertis' discovery in the *Vita Nuova* of numerous echoes of philosophical works against Dante's own description of it as rudimentary, nor that its title has any reference to spiritual rebirth. Boyde rightly exhibits the variety of Dante's poetic experiments in rapidly succeeding phases of production, at once followed by theoretical reflection on them. Dante's lyrics are not an overflow of emotion; they are technical triumphs, and exhibit a dramatic element which looks forward to the *Comedy* in all its variety; yet they are valuable in themselves. But the *Vita Nuova* is the real precursor of the *Comedy*, to which Dante had to return in spirit before he could begin the *Comedy*.

On Dante's Political Thought Professor Limentani is interesting, but to me unconvincing, since I cannot believe that 'Dante never altered his views at any stage during his exile from Florence', that the *Comedy* accepts the scheme outlined in the *Monarchy* and that Dante even interrupted the composition of the *Comedy* to write the *Monarchy*. Was Dante then unaffected by what Fr Foster oddly calls 'the rise or collapse of his hopes in the Emperor Henry