

more, and that the development of the historical ideas to our needs is to be left to someone else, perhaps in another volume. If this is so, the title should suggest the purpose more clearly and we must press for the sequence.

Finally, a few important details. In a book about an essentially structural and visual question it is surprising to find so few illustrations and those entirely limited to plans. Illustrations generally increase costs; but I cannot believe that simple pen and ink drawings printed in the body of the text in the same way as the plans are would have substantially done so and they might even have reduced the length of the text. As a typical example for instance, at the end of Chapter One there is a description of the development of the pendentive dome. Even to the architectural student the idea of the pendentive is difficult to explain at first, with every possible visual aid in the form of diagrams, sections, perspectives, solid models and wire frames, as anyone who has tried to do this will know. How much more difficult to a layman and how contorted the language becomes. It is rather reminiscent of one of those school essays in which, as an exercise, one was asked to describe verbally to a visitor from another planet a common object such as a lawn mower! Many of the important points Mr Rykwert makes about dome shapes, buttresses, pinnacles and vaulting for instance, would have been much more concretely and tellingly made by means of a few simple sections or three-dimensional diagrams.

In the discussion of the dome in eastern churches and its symbolic significance much more, I think, should have been made of the strong existing pagan tradition in which the dome in both tombs and temples was explicitly expressive of cosmic ideas and cosmogony; Earl Baldwin Smith's study of the dome and Hans Pieter L'orange's study of the relationship of the

dome to sunworship have thrown much light on this field. Into this discussion would have to be fitted the symbolic use of apertures in pre-Christian buildings of all kinds (e.g. the Pantheon) and the degree to which this was taken over by Christian architects and painters as, for instance, in some of the memorial churches at the Holy Places in Palestine and in such paintings as Crivelli's Annunciation where the Holy Spirit descends on the Madonna from the sky through a carefully sculptured and moulded hole in the arabesque frieze of the building containing her.

Lastly, the brief section devoted to 20th century thinking and work is marred by the misspelling of one of the few buildings discussed – Ronchamp – and one of the few writers discussed – Rudolph Schwarz.

Jeannette Mirsky's book is a chatty, pictorial survey accompanied by brief introductory notes and captions of all the religions of the world starting with cave paintings and finishing with Ronchamp in which the religious structures of each community are illustrated with magnificent photographs. The style is easy if rather romantic. The interpretation of interactions between religious developments and social ones are, on the whole, over-simplified and this is particularly evident in the large final section on Christianity. In comparison with Mr Rykwert's book it really fails to put across the east/west relationship and the complex strands of tradition which were woven into the early Christian basilicas and churches. For instance, the very simple assertion is made that the basilican plan was a direct descendant of the Roman basilica with the bishop taking the place of the judge. However, there are some refreshingly new illustrations, although the well-known examples are included too, and altogether, as a book for browsing in, it is very pleasant.

THOMAS A. MARKUS

MAN'S NATURE AND HIS COMMUNITIES, by Reinhold Niebuhr; *Geoffrey Bles*; 12s. 6d.

The first few pages of this book promise much: Niebuhr is commonly acknowledged to be the finest English-speaking post-liberal theologian, of whom Emil Brunner has written: '(Niebuhr) has made out of the dialectical theology something quite new; something genuinely American'. At the very beginning of the book the author says: 'This volume of essays on various aspects of man's individual and social existence is intended to serve two purposes: namely, to summarise, and to revise previously held opinions' (p. 9). Niebuhr has retained his reputation to a large extent because he has

always been prepared to rethink and modify his earlier opinions and, now in retirement at the age of 75, he has attempted what may be his final revision. One approaches the book with a sense of occasion; yet in the end the book is a disappointment. The book is not bad, but it rarely advances beyond the ordinary; it could well have been written by a man of considerably less talent.

Of the merits of the book, Niebuhr's great gift seems to be that of common sense (not, in fact, a common gift) especially in his analysis of the intricate relationship between idealism and

realism in political thought. He castigates idealism whether it be the dualism of Augustine's *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas Terrena* or Marx's redemption by the proletariat. Similarly he will have nothing to do with Machiavellian realism or that of bourgeois *laissez faire*. His analysis of past societies has an excellent balance but he makes no attempt to forge ahead into the future. His theologico-political thought does not seem to see beyond present-day American liberalism.

Niebuhr has complained elsewhere that: 'The theological movement initiated by Karl Barth has affected the thought of the Church profoundly, but only negatively; it has not challenged the thought outside the Church at all'. Niebuhr's realisation that we form an integral part of the world has done much to offset the complacency of bourgeois American Protestantism, but in his approach to the secular world his thought seems to be somewhat dechristianised.

What emerges after having read this book is that far too many unremarkable books are being published these days which tend to hide more important work. Publishers are hardly to be blamed for this, after all it is their business to sell books; we must rather refuse to buy the mediocre. *Man's Nature and His Communities* is not an unimportant book but it is hardly more than a rehash, and its mediocrity makes it difficult to read despite the fact that there are less than 90 pages in it by Niebuhr.

GEOFFREY TURNER O.P.

Enda McDonagh: *THE DECLARATION ON Religious Freedom*

Enda McDonagh, professor of Moral Theology at Maynooth, was one of the few theologians who were writing on this subject before the Council. His book contains the text of the Declaration, a history of the schema at the Council, and a commentary on the text. There follow four essays covering the background and implications of the Declaration.

Paper 9s 6d

Gregory Baum: *De Ecclesia*

*THE CONSTITUTION ON
THE CHURCH*

The text from Vatican II with a commentary by Gregory Baum, a foreword by Bishop B. C. Butler, and study club question at the end of each chapter.

Paper 10s 6d

George Tavard: *THE DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON Divine Revelation*

The text with a commentary, a history of the schema, and study club questions at the end of each chapter.

Paper 8s 6d

Rene Voillaume: *Brothers of Men*

Letters from the founder of the Petits Frères de Jesus to the Fraternities all over the world, and notes he wrote about their life.

Paper 12s 6d

Darton Longman & Todd