

which is partly an expansion, partly a re-print, of 'The Revolt of Asia', published three years ago. In between there are lectures and articles on the Renaissance and the Reformation, on Rationalism and on the world expansion of Western ideologies and of Christian tenets. All are on the same high level; few authors have evaded so successfully and so long any lapse into the second-rate.

It is only gradually that an underlying unity of theme becomes apparent. It is a prolegomenon to a study of the possible creation of a new world culture through the transforming force of Western technology. Of course it can only be a prolegomenon. There is only a passing reference to Mehmet Ali, who as Napoleon's heir in Egypt shares with him the responsibility for the creation of the modern Middle East. The problems of New Africa stay unexplored. But the importance of *The Movement of World Revolution* lies in what it foreshadows. It would seem to be a necessary prelude to Mr Dawson's greatest book since *The Making of Europe*.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

THE VOICE OF POETRY IN THE CONVERSATION OF MANKIND. By Michael Oakshott. (Bowes and Bowes; 10s. 6d.)

There is nothing in this witty essay more accurate than the account of poetic activity or more engaging than the refusal to allow it to be justified in the language of practical or scientific activity. But it may be wondered in the end whether Professor Oakshott has not justified the two latter in terms of poetic activity. If there is nothing but activity, the self and the not-self (the images) generating one another spontaneously, and each activity is distinguished by the kind of images which partner it, what happens when they speak in turn and listen to one another? According to Professor Oakshott, not argument leading to conclusions since this would reduce them all to science, nor persuasion leading to profit, since this would reduce them all to practice, but conversation—for in this 'different universes of discourse meet, acknowledge each other and enjoy an oblique relationship which neither requires nor forecasts their being assimilated to one another'. But this too, if it is to be a conversation and not a shouting match, needs a *formalis ratio*; the participants will ask whether the others are relevant or irrelevant, or, better still, interesting or boring. It then begins to sound very much like the description of poetic activity; 'in this process images may generate one another, they may modify and fuse with one another, but no premeditated achievement is pursued. . . . At every turn what impels the activity and gives it what coherence it may possess, is the delight offered and come upon in this perpetually extending partnership between the contemplating self and its images.' Change the word 'self' to 'selves' in the last sentence and you have a description of the conversation. The conversation itself then is meta-poetic activity. It is quite an achievement to have shown this.

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