

R E V I E W S
BOOK FOR THE MONTH

ESSAYS IN RECONSTRUCTION. Edited by Dom Ralph Russell, O.S.B.
 (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

These essays on the much discussed question of Reconstruction are written 'by people with different angles of approach', but all sharing 'a common fact and common principles in their Catholicism'. The first part of the book gives a sketch of this fact and the principles it involves, while the later essays show 'how these principles are applied to some spheres of life and thought—education, science, literature, and economics'. Here we see stated the fundamental difference between the Catholic approach to the work of reconstruction and the 'planning' which is at present so prominent, notably in the fields of education and economics. If any reconstructive work is to be effective, it must be based on principles derived from the nature of man as created by God for a definite end. This is a fact which can be proved rationally, as is done by Dom Ralph Russell in the first essay. As well as this rational basis of reconstruction, which should appeal to all men whether Christians or not, there is also the fact that God became man and suffered and died to reconstruct human nature from the destruction wrought by original sin. Hence, for the Catholic, all true reconstruction starts from Christ, whose redemptive work is still going on among us, and our own work of reconstruction can only have efficacy and vitality when united to Christ's action which remains with us in the sacrifice of the Mass. Dom Illtyd Trethowan, inspired by Canon Masure's excellent book, shows how it is in the sacrificial action of the Mass that we are most closely united with Christ in the work of reconstruction.

Passing from principles to their application, the essay on 'Catholics and Economic Reconstruction', by M. P. Fogarty, discusses the attitude of the Catholic with regard to current economic policies. He very rightly emphasises the hopelessness of a purely destructive criticism; that is to say, a condemnation of existing policies linked with an inability to supply any practical policy, which is technically satisfactory and yet clearly differentiated from existing policies which derive from a non-Christian trend of thought. The only practical attitude is 'for Catholics to take an active part in supporting current social policies, but to try to modify them from within in such a way as to divert their trend away from its present direction'. This demands the creation of a body of Catholic economists with the technical training and the ability to formulate economic policies in

Christian terms, whose knowledge will be respected by other professional economists. In this way there would be some hope of bringing to an end the unnatural separation between economics and morality which has been the root of so much injustice in the past.

The ten essays in this book cover almost every aspect of reconstruction. It is impossible in one review to give an adequate appreciation of each one of them. They are not intended to be a complete and exhaustive study of the subjects treated, but should be a most valuable preparation for Catholics who wish to probe deeper into these matters, and a very useful introduction to Catholic principles for those outside the Church. Dom Ralph Russell and his collaborators have succeeded in producing not merely a collection of essays but a book which forms one organic whole, deriving its unity from the common faith of the writers.

DROSTAN MACLAREN, O.P.

REASON AND CONDUCT IN HUME'S TREATISE. By Rachel M. Kydd. (Cumberlege, Oxford University Press; 12s. 6d.)

Miss Rachel Kydd has given us an interesting analysis of Hume's teaching regarding the influence of reason on conduct. The question, 'Can reason influence conduct?' was answered by Hume, not with an absolute negative, and Miss Kydd considers that he is to be interpreted as meaning that reason can be a mediate cause of action, though reason alone can never be the basis of moral action. Hume's phrase, 'Reason the slave of passion', must be understood in this light, viz. not as totally destructive of the element of judgment in morality, but simply as a statement of Hume's view that any judgment is dependent on a pre-existent desire.

Miss Kydd makes a strong case for this interpretation, and we may well admit with her that Hume's statement of it destroys the *a priori* rationalism of his predecessors. Nevertheless the role which she gives to the mediate function of reason in Hume's thought does appear somewhat inconsistent with his general position, and indeed, taken in conjunction with his persistent undervaluation of the impelling power of the concept of duty, to raise problems of a metaphysical nature for which Miss Kydd does not appear to allow.

If Hume be not a moral statistician then he must face the question of whether reason does give us a knowledge which differs in kind from that of the senses. If it does, then he will be forced to revise his theory of knowledge, if not, it is difficult to see how the use of reason claimed for him by Miss Kydd can be other than inconsistent. Was he perhaps too acute a thinker to be consistent in terms of his own theory? In the attempt to find a moral criterion there does not exist—unless a *deus ex machina* is involved—a *via media* between a metaphysical approach in the Aristotilean sense and one which is subjective, properly falling within the provinces of the psychologist and