

## BLACKFRIARS

How are we to reawaken interest? Chiefly by remedying the causes responsible for its present neglect. Not the least important of such causes is the tendency to use, or rather misuse, words, employing them with little or no realisation of their significance and not infrequently making them bear a meaning entirely foreign. "Thus when we hear that God is Charity or Love, our whole understanding of the statement is vitiated because our thought is debased," and our devotion will be debased if it flow from a "fluidity of emotion" and not from "the fulness of dogma." Only when grounded in supernatural truths can our spiritual life be fruitful. Hence the necessity of knowing Who God is, and what His Love implies. A consideration of these points occupies two-thirds of the book. The most interesting chapter is that entitled *Divine Love and Human Freedom*, where the author clearly points out that true freedom consists in conformity of man's will to the will of God, in the choice of God as the Final Good, in so firmly establishing the will in good that it becomes inconceivable for man to choose evil. Evil exists, not because God is powerless to check it, but because man abuses God's gift. The third section of the book deals with our love for God, the first and greatest of the commandments, and in the observance of which we fully realise our perfection. While the chapter on the *Seven Last Words* forms a fitting conclusion, the matter is far too compressed to make easy reading. If one may add another adverse criticism it is that quotations are too numerous, and so apt to distract from the main theme. But apart from these minor defects the book is to be praised and recommended, and the author, a member of the Anglican community of Nashdom, congratulated for so successfully accomplishing a difficult task.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, O.P.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES. By Karl Barth. (James Clarke; 1s.)

"The quest for the one Church . . . cannot be concerned with magical fascination of numerical unity or uniqueness, nor with the ethical and social ideals of uniformity, mental harmony and agreement. It must rather be concerned with the imperative content of the acknowledgment that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God above all, for all and in all." (p. 18.) "We have no right to explain the multiplicity of the Churches as a necessary mark of the visible and empirical as contrasted with the ideal, invisible and essential Church; no right, because this entire distinction is foreign to the New Testament, and because, according to the New Testament, even in this respect the Church of Jesus Christ is but one . . . visible by tokens in the multitude of its confessed adherents, visible as a congregation with its office-

bearers, visible as a ministry of Word and Sacrament." (p. 25.) "What is our standing ground if we take the familiar line of ascribing to the Roman, the Greek, the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Anglican and other Churches their special attributes and functions within an imagined organic totality? However well this may sound, it is not theology, it is mere sociology or philosophy of history; it means that in order to evade the question of Church unity we are spinning the thread of our own notions instead of facing the question which Christ confronts us, and listening for His own answer." (p. 27.) "The union of the Churches is too great a matter to be the result of a movement however cautious and far-sighted . . . From this point of view I am not distressed by the well-known and widely regretted attitude of the Roman See towards union movements of past and present. It was and is needful that someone somewhere should make a stand against the excessive claims of all Church movements, and assert that the union of the Churches is a thing which cannot be manufactured, but must be found and confessed, in subordination to that already accomplished oneness of the Church which is in Christ Jesus." (pp. 47-48.) "A union of the Churches . . . would mean a union of the Confessions into one unanimous Confession." (p. 50.)

Yet for Barth that one visible Church and unanimous Confession is no more existing fact, for it has been destroyed by sin. Vain is all attempt to seek for the unity of the Church apart from "the quest for Jesus Christ as the concrete Head and Lord of the Church." Unity has been lost because He has been lost. "Jesus Christ as the one Mediator between God and man is the oneness of the Church, is that unity within which there may be multiplicity of communities, of gifts, of persons within one Church, while through it a multiplicity of Churches are excluded." (p. 19.)

This book is, as was to be expected from its author, another shattering challenge to those who have inherited the consequences of the Reformation while repudiating or emasculating its principles. Detesting those principles as we do, detesting ours as does Karl Barth, we cannot, nevertheless, fail to revere him as one for whom the sovereign Truth and Will of God is paramount, and for whom "the concept of toleration originates in political and philosophical principles which are not only alien but opposed to the Gospel." (p. 4.) He knows with us that "If we are listening for Christ's voice, then it is not a matter of opinion but of faith that over against the doctrine, order and life of other Churches we should utter a more or less emphatic No at certain decision points . . . The truth of God in Jesus Christ compels us again and again to decision and choice . . . unmoved by the possible reproach of narrow-mindedness and want of heart,

lending nor ear to those who cry 'peace, peace' when there is no peace." (p. 32.) Perhaps the Catholic "Non possumus" towards some contemporary reunion movements has had no more striking vindication than from this Calvinist.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

#### HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

DISCIPLINARY DECREES OF THE GENERAL COUNCILS. H. J. Schroeder, O.P. (B. Herder Book Co.; 25s.)

The General Councils of the Church are only twenty in number. Eighteen of these are here dealt with, and all these were held before the great European revolt from the Church in the sixteenth century. To one not well versed in ecclesiastical literature it therefore comes as a shock to be told that the results of these Councils cannot be obtained in any one volume, or any ten volumes for the matter of that. Until recent years they could be secured secondhand, and at a fabulous price, in the vast tomes of Labbe-Mansi. Since 1900 Père Lequercq has translated into French and augmented the nine volumes of Bishop Hefele in fourteen 4to. volumes, totally altogether 11,500 pages. Father Schroeder has confined his work to one 4to. of 669 pages. From a merely material point of view we can see how much he has put us in his debt.

But there is a qualification to be made; the volume under review is confined to the disciplinary decrees of the Councils, ignoring those on dogmatic questions. Yet we should indeed be ungrateful did we complain. Father Schroeder has done a sufficient service as it is; perhaps some other scholar will be found diligent enough to do the dogmatic part as he has done the canonical one. Had he not gone to the pains of writing up the historical background of each Council he would have found space and to spare for the inclusion of the doctrinal decrees, but he decided this background was necessary and I cannot but agree with him. "For, after all, the full scope and import of a conciliar decision, whether of a dogmatic or disciplinary nature, can be grasped only when studied in the light of the conditions and forces that produced it."

The plan of the work is simple. First we have the history in brief of each Council, then the text of each canon or decree, followed by a commentary. At the end of the volume are given the canons or decrees, 401 in number, in their original language, Greek or Latin. Some students will probably wish that the decrees in their original language were placed in the body of the work, immediately before the author's translation of each. At times the translation appears cumbersome and perhaps even