

that even the dissolution of the Church into permanent schism was preferable to criticizing a pope, however dubious his claims to office, it is obvious that *Haec sancta* was an honest and moderate solution to a desperate crisis. It was the schism, not the extreme theological opinions of certain radical 'conciliarists', that produced the decree, as Mr Oakley has no difficulty in showing. But when the schism ended the decree was still there, on the statute book as it were.

In the climate of the extreme monarchic and hierocratic papalism of the last century or so, a multitude of Catholic historians and theologians have sought to get rid of it. They have tarred the fathers of Constance with the same brush as extremists like Marsiglio of Padua, though there is not the slightest doubt this is a slander. They have invented queer distinctions so that *this* part of the Constance *acta* is authoritative—this is necessary since the restoration of an indubitable line of popes depends on it—and *that* part is inconvenient and unauthoritative. They have assumed that all the time every right-minded man really knew who the true pope was. This, in spite of the fact that to judge by the *Annuario Pontificio*, and the various Catholic Encyclopaedias, no one, not even the Pope, really knows exactly what names should be included in the true line of Peter's successors. It is doubtful if even the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* can show a record of greater disingenuity in altering or obliterating awkward facts than the historiography of the conciliar movement. It was the schism and the need to deal with it that prompted *Haec sancta*. It is understandable but nevertheless wrong that when the schism was ended and the pope could once again resume his normal role, conservative opinion should seek to dodge the lesson Providence had set up for the Church—that however great the papal position it is a position within the Church, not over it, and that ultimately the pope is no less bound by the basic rules of the faith than any other baptized person.

Mr. Oakley moves from his very convincing vindication of the decree to some theological comments on the present state of the Church and the present exercise of papal authority.

He points out that *Haec sancta* has precisely the same kind of authority as *Pastor aeternus*, which says such very different things. He does not waste his time or ours attempting a synthesis of these opposites. He accepts a much greater relativity in such matters than is usual. In this I am absolutely sure he is right. He rejects the abuse of the *semper idem* view of the Church. (How right Wittgenstein was to spend so much time on asking what is meant by following a rule, by saying this is the same.) He accepts that there are radical discontinuities in historical theology and indeed in the way the Church functions. He argues that we are in the grip of just such a crisis of identity, or rather of discontinuity, now. He rejects very firmly the notion of a 'post-ecumenical' Church, a cartel of like-minded ecclesiastics shedding a dogma here and a doctrine there to create a monopolistic corporation able to live in comfort without competition or criticism. His positive suggestions are interesting. He has taken Charles Davis very seriously, as any one who aspires to say anything sensible about the structure of the Church these days must. He wants a new council, a Vatican III, which if called by the Pope will be because he has been under pressure from a lobby composed of laity and clergy agitating in each substantial body of Catholics. Mr Oakley sensibly does not attempt to predict or presume to prescribe what such a council would do. It would be aware of the successor of Peter all right, but it would take the view that today's situation was much more like that of Constance than that of the *Kulturkampf* that prompted Vatican I. Not that we have a schism but we do have a crisis of confidence in the capacity, honesty, and good intentions of the Church's present government. If necessary Mr Oakley thinks the Pope can and must be told to behave like a successor of Peter. To some this will seem bold and extreme but Mr Oakley's argument deserves reading in its context, which is of a genuine concern for the ordinary, puzzled Catholic laymen and cleric. He has much that is valid and relevant to say and he says it clearly and well. His book ought to be read.

ERIC JOHN

NEW WAYS IN THEOLOGY, by J. Sperna Weiland. Logos Books. Gill and Macmillan, Dublin. 222 pp, xv, 18s net.

If this survey of Protestant new theology does not receive the same welcome in this country

as in its country of origin (it is the work of the professor for the history of theology in

the University of Amsterdam) it will be because the former Bishop of Woolwich has already, through his best-sellers and newspaper articles, introduced many to such concepts as 'secularization', 'the death of God' and 'religionless Christianity' and to such writers as Tillich, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer.

Some would write off the whole of the new theology as a theological word-game, or no more than 'a debate between the members of a closed circle of mandarins within the agreed terms of their system', to quote Dom Aelred Graham on the Second Vatican Council, but in answer to the question: 'Is the new Protestant theology really new?', the author believes that a new theological experiment is really taking place here, that it is not happening without continuity with tradition, and that it has to do with the secular meaning of the gospel.

He provides an exposition of the new theology for those, then, who feel there is something of interest or value in it, and who would like a good guide to join them in a learning situation. Like other books that are appearing nowadays, this one does not analyse and suck dry the subject, but claims no more than to supply the background and provide a few sign-posts to help those interested on their way. So, first of all, a landscape is provided and the opening chapters deal with secularization, the changed image of the world, and the philosophy (phenomenology, existentialism, logical positivism, linguistic analysis) that is the theologian's travelling companion. The main part of the survey deals with the path taken by the 'reconnoiterers' in the new terrain of the modern world: Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling, John A. T. Robinson in England, Paul van Buren, Harvey Cox, Gibson Winter and Carl Michalson in the U.S.A., and Gabriel Vahanian, William Hamilton, Thomas J. J. Altizer and Dorothee Sölle who write on the theme of the death of God. Finally, an attempt is made by the author to find out what the beginning of a new map looks like, examining the reality of God, Revelation, Christ, Man, the Church and Faith in the light (or darkness) of the new theology.

The treatment is clear and concise, and whets one's appetite for other books in this series likely to be published: one on Karl Barth, who is mentioned only occasionally in this survey but who is acknowledged as beginning the new theological movement with

his *Epistle to the Romans*, another on the Roman Catholic movement.

Reactions to the Protestant new theology have been so bitter and acrimonious at times that one would imagine that it is the anti-Christ in the form of 'the humanization of faith and the anthropologization of theology' who is being followed. What comes out of this survey of the writings of the new theologians is their undoubted sincerity and deep concern. To some extent they are all engaged in the wider debate (dialectics) between prudence (foresight) and temperance (caution), which in our times has already knocked down a number of denominational barriers. Christians of all persuasions, for example, join together in accusing Dr Robinson of being imprudent when what they really mean is that he has been incautious. On the other side, Romans as well as Anglicans, for example, would acclaim him for taking risks with the ordinary Christian's faith that are justified in view of the general inertia that has come from the loss of nerve of Christian leadership in an age which has lost its naivety (Karl Jaspers) and in which man has come of age (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). Are the new ways in theology wider and deeper than denominational differences, and is this new movement in theology the movement of the Spirit speaking to the Churches, indeed God speaking to us now?

The author, quite rightly, will not take the decision for the reader, though he has much sympathy for those whose writings he expounds. He writes mainly for study groups in parishes, universities and elsewhere who want to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the new theology, or for individuals who want to do this on their own. This invitation to the laity, in particular, it is hoped will be accepted. As Charles Davis said in *Theology and the University*, the point is not that the laity need theology so much as that theology needs the laity. One could recommend this survey of Protestant new theology merely for the reason that it serves well the needs of the growing number of ecumenically-minded small groups who are developing a taste and need for theology in their efforts to make the Good News relevant and meaningful in the twentieth century. The fact that Hegel, Marx and Heidegger are also brought into the ambit of the survey makes it possible that this simple guide-book will widen the debate to include the non-Christian as well as the Christian.

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