

COMMUNISM AND CHRIST. By Charles W. Lowry. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 9s. 6d.)

AGAINST THE STREAM. By Karl Barth. (S.C.M. Press; 16s.)

The first of these books maintains that the unconscious ethical passion which motivates Communists is due to the fact that Communism is a new universal salvation religion of a novel this-worldly type. Evidence is presented to support this view and Dr Lowry goes on to maintain that Christianity, as a religion of other-worldly love, presents a better solution for man's problems. This is all very well, but no real effort is made to criticize the all important theoretic apologia of the Communist. A large part of the appeal of Communism lies in its claim to be an all-embracing scientific account of the basic laws which govern all change. The plausibility of this account is not lessened by saying that it is the product of a distorted desire for salvation; it is only met when the basic concepts of the account are shown on analysis to be misleading or meaningless. The value of Dr Lowry's book is not that it does this, but that it gives a pleasantly written account of recent American religious thought.

The second book, as the name of its author would suggest, is of a very different type. It is pure Barth, with all his genius, his dialectic skill and his perversity. One wonders why he does not have the word 'Vatican' printed in red. The basic theme, in the essays here collected, is the attitude and behaviour of the Christian Church in the face of Communism. Barth is sensitive to the fact that we have seen the collapse of an old world, and that this means that we must liberate ourselves from its merely temporal categories when we confront the new world. Like many thinkers of his type, Barth errs in that he over-stresses the dramatic element in the historical, which leads him to overestimate the lack of continuity between old and new. Precisely because, however, his theological position leads him to see the State as unaware of the relationship to God and as embodying values that can only be relative, he is able to see (and to accept) elements in the new situation, which, in his view, are good, while remaining free to reject the dominating secularism of systems. For him, and it is in line with his general position, the present conflict between East and West is a mere clash between powers to which the Church is neutral, though it cannot abstract from the evil deeds of both. These she must judge in faith and call men to reconstruct all things in Christ. This analysis is rather naïve. While it is true that the Church cannot identify herself with any given regime, and may not permit herself to become the tool of any power, Eastern or Western, it is also her duty to protest against error and injustice. Barth seems to underestimate both the strength and novel character of Communism and the extent to which even salvific

grace is mediated through 'natural' laws and institutions. He is so anxious to preserve the element of personal responsibility that he forgets the extent to which even the Christian's decision is, in the providence of God, determined by institutional forms and social circumstance.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE END OF TIME. A Meditation on the Philosophy of History. By Josef Pieper, translated by Michael Bullock. (Faber and Faber; 10s. 6d.)

Dr Pieper's argument is based on the contention that 'there is no philosophical question which, if it really wants to strike the ground intended by itself and in itself, does not come upon the primeval rock of theological pronouncements', and that this is particularly the case where the philosophy of history is concerned. For the end of time means two things: the end-situation *within* history, and the ultimate state of affairs *outside* history when time is ended; and the first of these is unintelligible except in the light of the second. The book thus leads us away from the inadequacies of contemporary 'culture-sociological' philosophizing about history to a more realistic approach. It is not difficult in these days to feel 'apocalyptic' about the future; and as Dr Pieper shows, while the 'progressive' views of history of a Kant or a Fichte now seem to us incredibly naïve, the outlandish symbolism of the *Apocalypse* no longer seems so outlandish. . . . For this age, the idea that the world may come to an end in horrific catastrophe is no remote possibility. Nor is the idea of the dominion of Antichrist as a 'planetary despotism with progressive technical development and the extinction of spirituality'. At the same time, as Dr Pieper points out, Christian hope, the conviction that in the end Antichrist will be defeated, does not merely look to the end-beyond-time: 'it is a distinguishing mark of the Christian martyr that in him "no word is raised against God's creation"': it is Antichrist who 'is hostile to creation': 'is it so unlikely that the Church . . . might remain the sole champion of the natural dignity of man?' Christianity looks to the eventual establishment of a 'new heaven and a new earth': which must mean that 'this mundane reality which meets concrete experience, this "waiting" creation in its entirety, will also . . . beyond all expectation, have a happy ending'.

Dr Pieper put us deeply in his debt with the publication in English of *Leisure the Basis of Culture*: this present book greatly increases our indebtedness. It must be confessed, however, that the translation is far from felicitous, and may unhappily put off readers who would otherwise profit by Dr Pieper's wisdom.

GERALD VANN, O.P.