

REVIEWS

VISION AND ACTION: The Problems of Ecumenism. By Professor L. A. Zander. (Victor Gollancz; 18s.)

This is an important book. It is the first full presentation in English of an Orthodox view of the history and principles of the Ecumenical Movement, and is moreover a penetrating and often very subtle analysis of the idea of Ecumenism as seen through Orthodox eyes. Professor Zander has had wide experience of the whole movement, and in particular of the work done in its meetings and conferences. Over a long period he has met and talked with representatives of every Christian allegiance, and has learned to see with their eyes and understand their point of view, not merely from books, but in the personal contacts of ecumenical discussion. Only when he deals with the Catholic position is it plain from his lack of understanding that here is knowledge largely gathered from books and not hammered out in the give-and-take of personal intercourse.

Professor Zander is an enthusiast, converted heart and mind to the ecumenical spirit; yet he is critical of much ecumenical method, and by no means a facile optimist about its results. He draws a valuable distinction between the historical and the eschatological approach to the problems of ecumenism. The former envisages the attainment of Christian unity on earth; impossible at present but realisable in God's good time, even if that time be a thousand years hence. The aim of the latter is a unity in love, unrealisable in any historical form, to be longed for, lived for and worked for now, but to be reached in its fullness only in the life of the world to come. It is not difficult to detect to which view his own preference leans.

Catholics sometimes wonder how it is that the Orthodox can reconcile the extent of their participation in the ecumenical movement with their belief as to the nature and function of the Church, which approximate so closely to our own. Professor Zander holds that the fundamental division of Christendom is not between Protestant and Catholic, but between West and East. This distinction lies in the very nature of theological thought and goes deeper than any difference of dogma. It originated in the separate development of the dominant characteristics of the Greek and Latin genius—speculative intuition on the one hand and juridical organisation on the other. The result has been that in the Orthodox *ethos* the juridical concept of organic government plays an altogether minor part compared with the idea of community, *sobornost*, togetherness, which enters so deeply into Eastern consciousness. This renders it specially sympathetic to the search for unity amongst separated Christians.

It is a curious fact, indicative of the formidable psychological barrier which separates Orthodox from Catholic, that while his appreciation of the depth and riches of Catholic life is generous, the one point at which Professor Zander's ecumenical insight seems to desert him is when he deals with the universalism of the Papacy. He appears to regard the *plena potestas* of the Holy See as unlimited in an altogether arbitrary sense, and thinks of it, unconsciously perhaps, in terms of worldly ambition, as the desire to dominate by the extension of power. He pictures the Pope, as Vicar of Christ, penetrating the entire life of the Catholic world with his thought and will—not perhaps in itself an untrue picture but in isolation so one-sided as to be altogether misleading. There is here apparently no consciousness of the Catholic conception of the Church as the company of the baptised, the Spirit-formed Body of Christ, having his mind and bearing in it his truth as a precious treasure. The Pope is seen as over against the Church, dominating it by arbitrary power, not as spokesman and teacher of the truth, of which the whole body of the faithful is depository, and the episcopate, with Peter's successor at their head, the divinely guided guardians.

Vision and Action is a translation from the original Russian, and was written before the issue in December 1949 of the Instruction of the Holy Office to local Ordinaries on the Ecumenical Movement. In this Instruction the Holy See is deeply concerned to guard the faithful from the risk of indifferentism, which is the special danger of ecumenism. In a new-found sense of personal unity in Christ, bred of contacts in ecumenical discussion, participants of different allegiances may easily be drawn into the error of whittling down or glossing over dogmatic divergence in order to bring opposing doctrines into line. One of the chief merits of Professor Zander's book is that in this matter he is a safe guide for Catholics; a faithful Orthodox with a true appreciation of the importance of dogma, and a realist gifted with a keen insight into the pitfalls into which the rule of heart over head may lead the movement. He shows that, however much such tendencies may have made headway in the early stages of ecumenism, and may still survive in it, the true ecumenical spirit is now widely recognised as depending upon the frank recognition of dogmatic divergence and the patient exploration of its roots.

The Instruction of the Holy Office, while maintaining the official attitude of abstention on the part of the Church in matters of ecumenical organisation and carefully guarding against the risk of indifferentism among Catholics participating as individuals in ecumenical work, makes very clear that the Holy See contemplates the possibility of a wide adoption throughout the Church of the ecumenical spirit in our

approach to non-Catholics, and is preparing for it by urging on the Bishops the special study in each diocese of the movement and everything connected with it.

Professor Zander would say that the Catholic Church is incapable of assimilating the true ecumenical spirit because the nature of its universal claim makes zeal for conversion incumbent on it. He maintains that proselytism in any form is destructive of genuine ecumenism. It is a pity he uses this rather sinister word; in some of its meanings he would carry the agreement of Catholics. There is a real sense in which Catholics must hold that truth cannot be brought home to the conscience by skilful tactics or by the victory of mind over mind, but only in the humble search for a deeper appreciation of it by both giver and receiver. Indeed, Professor Zander seems to imply this by the distinction he makes between proselytising and confession of one's faith and preaching its truth; the one he condemns as destructive of true ecumenism, the other he holds to be essential to its spirit. Nor is his thought on this matter consistent with itself; for he claims that it is of the essence of true ecumenism that each section of divided Christendom should be prepared fully to propound its faith, and yet he seems to maintain that the Catholic Church in doing so denies itself the possibility of sharing in the true ecumenical spirit. There is here an unresolved contradiction; yet in spite of this defect *Vision and Action*, to quote the Bishop of Chichester's introduction, is 'a fascinating exposition of the Ecumenical Movement itself, its presuppositions, its principles and problems, from which Christians of all traditions can profit'. And certainly Catholics not least.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

UNDERSTANDING EUROPE. By Christopher Dawson. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

PORTRAIT OF EUROPE. By Salvador de Madariaga. (Hollis and Carter; 18s.)

We are steadily coming to understand that the dilemmas which face us in every sphere have an essential unity. The European watch has no longer an effective mainspring, and the more it is shaken to induce it once more to start ticking on its way, the nearer it comes to disintegration. Mr Dawson has played an important part in teaching us this lesson, and his latest book, *Understanding Europe*, sums up and presents afresh his teaching. It is a book which is at once simple, direct and distinguished.

Mr Dawson sees Europe as a society of peoples bound together by a cultural relationship inherited from a noble past. They are the children of classical antiquity and Christianity. They have shared down the ages their experiences, their triumphs, their problems and