

Fr Bligh's book is a first and successful attempt to fill this gap for English readers. In his preface he writes that his book 'is not a pious meditation on the priesthood, but a liturgical and theological essay, written in the belief that a careful analysis of the rite will in the end be more conducive to solid piety than a devotional treatment of the subject could be'. His analysis is indeed admirably done with a judicious and happy blending of liturgical scholarship and theological acumen. Naturally there are several points in what remains (even after the Pope's definitive clarification of the main practical problem) so thorny a theological subject, where one could disagree with the author—for example, his views on the relationship between the sacerdotal character and powers, and his tentative suggestion that the bishop's imposition of hands may not *always* have been the matter of the sacrament. But these questions are quite incidental to his excellent commentary on the text of the ordination rite which forms the bulk of this book, and which makes it a signal ordination present—to mark reception of the diaconate, however, rather than the priesthood. For while this book will greatly help those who are already priests to stir up the grace they received at their ordination, it will be of even greater value for deacons as they prepare themselves for the priesthood: at the very least it will help them to understand what the rather difficult words of the form of the sacrament mean.

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JESUS IN HIS TIME. By Daniel-Rops. Translated by R. W. Millar. (Eyre and Spottiswoode in association with Burns, Oates; 30s.)

When Zachaeus climbed into the sycamore he wanted, it may be presumed, to gain an impression of Jesus as a person. A similar pre-occupation must have inspired the request of those Greek strangers who approached Philip towards the end of our Lord's earthly life: 'Sir, we would see Jesus'. They were concerned, it seems, less with our Lord's teaching than with his personality. This book gives the impression of having been written for the modern Zachaeus, the man who wants to 'see' Jesus. In tracing so fully and carefully the course of our Lord's life, M. Daniel-Rops seeks to provide the sort of view of him which might have been had at any given stage from the vantage-point of a wayside tree, the view of a personality, dominant and mysterious amid the swirling Jewish crowds.

It is natural therefore that he should have given special emphasis to the question of environment. He draws extensively and expertly on such relevant subjects as the rabbinical writings and the apocrypha, the geography and archeology of Palestine, and Roman and Jewish social history, in order to reconstruct the settings of our Lord's life as it unfolded. Even this, however, is not sufficient for his purpose. Far from

confining himself to scriptural and cognate subjects, he adduces also the broad traditions of Christian thought to throw light on his subject, ranging from the classic profundities of the Fathers to the oddities of the oddest of nineteenth-century rationalists. But he knows also when to be silent. At the great moments of the story he falls back with superb self-effacement and allows the sublimity of the gospel to speak for itself. There is no vulgar obtrusiveness, no attempt at improving on the words of scripture. Placed against its authentic social and cultural background, the figure of Christ emerges transcendent and incomprehensible but infinitely appealing; and it is the real Christ, not a repository print.

While therefore the author's imaginative gifts and his expert knowledge are so vigorously and so effectively employed, it is with considerable gratitude that one notices how restrained his treatment is in comparison with the embarrassingly lurid attempts of certain recent English writers. Indeed it has long been recognized that for such a task as he has here set himself, M. Daniel-Rops is uniquely equipped. Perhaps no other popular author could reinforce the gifts of a great romantic writer with so impressive a grasp of the technical details of this subject. No other expert could so enliven those details with the creative force of fine writing.

It must be admitted, however, that while the portrayal of our Lord himself is so eminently successful, the treatment of his teaching seems by comparison a little meagre, the single page devoted to the Sermon on the Mount being particularly disappointing. This is the only feature which occurs to one as notably inadequate, and even this is perhaps understandable in view of the author's legitimate preoccupation with personality and environment. It was in order to see Jesus rather than to hear his teaching that Zachaeus climbed the tree. Then too where the scope is so vast, one cannot agree with quite everything, and minor inadequacies and inaccuracies are virtually inevitable. Thus the discussion of the gospel manuscripts (p. 30) seems woefully thin without any explicit reference to the Chester-Beatty papyri. One cannot agree that 'The strangeness of this doctrine (of the Beatitudes) was that those who on earth were underprivileged were those favoured of heaven' (p. 195). This had long been a classic theme of Jewish eschatology. It was not merely '... the same disposition which made ... (the centurion of Capernaum) believe in military discipline which made him also believe in Jesus' (p. 216). Surely the force of his reasoning consisted in an analogy: 'As I control men by a word in virtue of the authority imparted to me, so do you control natural elements (such as the illness from which my servant suffers) by a word in virtue of the authority imparted to you'. It seems greatly exaggerated to dismiss the religious

attitude of contemporary Judaism as 'a stiff and awestruck reverence' (p. 332), and to suggest that the conception of God's loving Fatherhood was for the Jews a complete innovation involving 'a certain almost sacrilegious familiarity' (pp. 332, 333). One has only to recall the sublimely beautiful 'Torah' blessing which would even then have been recited every morning in the liturgical prayer known as the *Sema*: '... With a great and superabundant pity Thou hast pitied us, our Father and our King... O our Father, Merciful Father, Merciful One, have mercy on us...'

However, the slightness of such defects may be gauged from the fact that these are among the most important.

The value of having an English version of such a book hardly needs to be emphasized. The original appeared over ten years ago. Since then its importance has been universally recognized and it has been translated into most of the principal languages. English must be almost the last. Frankly one wonders what we can have been thinking of to have waited so long. Popular, competent, and original, it is just the sort of Life of Christ which ought to be available in our own language. The actual quality of this translation seems to be somewhat above the average standard (admittedly this is almost incredibly low at present), and well above the standard of *Israel and the Ancient World*, the English version of a previous work of M. Daniel-Rops. It is sometimes awkward and even ungrammatical, rarely obscure, and hardly ever downright inaccurate. But mistakes such as 'Burnt' for 'Burned' (p. 69), 'To recognize Christ *with* the prophetic descriptions' (p. 78), 'To cap... a dome... upon Jerusalem' (p. 343), and absurdities such as 'mental anity' (presumably this means sanity, p. 243) are, to put it mildly, a pity. Several proper names have suffered too: 'Dionysius Exigus', 'Antiochus Epiphanus', 'Oxyhrngue', etc. It is disappointing that a proper translation could not have been given of the *Dies Irae* quoted on page 360, instead of the rather indifferent paraphrase actually supplied. There are one or two quite odious Americanisms: e.g. 'Fall for' (p. 54), and 'Pull a fast one' (p. 403). Finally *metanoette* (*sic*, p. 336) does not mean 'to be born again', and it is the translator's bad punctuation that makes it appear as though this were being asserted.

However, spread over the space of nearly five hundred pages these blemishes are infrequent enough and are well worth enduring. It can fairly be said that throughout long sections of this translation most of the vigour and some of the beauty of M. Daniel-Rops' prose survives. It is this factor, combined with the excellence and originality of the material content, that makes the book, in spite of everything, a delight to read and a work of lasting importance.

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