

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES: Vol. 1. THE FIRST SIX HUNDRED YEARS, by Jean Daniélou and Henri Marrou; *Darton, Longman and Todd, 50s.*

It is no longer possible for the professional theologian to ignore history, as he has so often done in recent centuries. He may try to talk in the purely abstract about the Church, but even if he does there are others, especially educated laymen, to challenge his escape from reality. Only yesterday, it seems, students in seminaries were still being taught never to admit anything as true which was scandalous. It is hardly surprising that theology became dusty when the flesh-and-blood reality of the people of God, and the anguish of the tension of Christian life were so ignored. This new history of the Church, to be completed in five volumes, is a sign of the changed times. It is planned for the general educated reader, is edited by a distinguished group of scholars from eight countries, and appears in English, French, German and Dutch editions. It is significant also, in the context of modern historiography, in its awareness of the value of the archaeologist and the art historian to the student of Church history. A feature of the first volume is a series of forty-three plates, selected and annotated by Peter Ludlow; they form an integral part of the work, not simply a decorative addition. It is made clear in a short but highly useful introduction by Professor David Knowles that in this undertaking the apologist or controversialist approach to history is abandoned.

The editors and publishers are to be congratulated on their imaginative and in many ways successful enterprise. It is precisely because what they have undertaken promises to be so valuable that they deserve some serious criticism. We are told that the series is intended to meet the needs 'of the general reader and of the non-specialist student'. This intention is frustrated in Père Daniélou's half of the first volume, a series of

fascinating, erudite essays which will surely defeat any reader who is not already a well-informed church historian. It is ludicrous to give a Greek quotation, adding in brackets the same in roman letters instead of translating into English. (See p. 175.) It should be made clear also that there is another opinion than the author's on many things to do with Judaeo-Christian relations in the early part of this era. The failure to keep the general reader in mind is glaring in the bibliographies which are a feature of the volume; potentially of great value, they are in fact largely useless owing to the mistaken idea which appears to underlie them, that readers will have access to the most unlikely learned journals in Western Europe. Even *Analecta Bollandiana*, to which we are referred for material on Celtic Christianity, is missing from most university libraries in Great Britain.

This raises another point. Professor Marrou is on the whole successful where Père Daniélou is not, but his sections on the growth of monasticism illustrate how little the continent seems to know of what is produced in these islands. Much has been written since Gougaud (1932) and Bieler (1949) which seems to have been overlooked. Tighter editorial control of the English edition is called for. One is left wondering who is responsible for this at present; there are too many misprints, too many uncertainties about forms of names (e.g., Gallien and Gallienus), differences about dates between the chronological tables and the text, weakness in translation, omissions in the indexes. It would be a great pity if such an admirable undertaking were to founder because of ignorance of the general reader's needs on the part of some distinguished contributors, and poor editorial work in the publisher's office.

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