CHURCH AND SCHOOL. A study of the impact of education on religion, by Joan Brothers; *Liverpool University Press, 25s.*

The aim of Dr Brothers' research, to discover to what extent the parish can absorb the consequences of social change, is obviously of the utmost importance to the Church in this country. The work is a study in depth of one year's output of the Catholic grammar schools of Liverpool, of pupils who had spent two or more years in the Sixth Form, and was made three years after they had left school. It seeks to answer such questions as: how do young Catholics who have attended grammar schools perceive this social institution (the parish)? Do they still identify it with Catholicism? Or do they regard the parish as being part of a cultural way of living from which their education and social status have removed them? At a time when on the one hand social mobility is greatly increasing among Catholics, while on the other strenuous efforts are being made to put over the idea of the parish as a community, the relevance of the findings cannot be exaggerated.

The conclusions stemming directly from the research are quite clear, but there are also wider implications. The former concern changes in social structures and in social relationships. Most of the eighty-four subjects interviewed asked little more from the parish than the provision of adequate religious services, that it be a good 'religious filling station'. They had no sense of belonging to a community. Flowing from that is a change in the role system between pastor and parishioner. The changes in the wider social structure have meant that this relationship has been disturbed, with misunderstandings on both sides. There is no complete breakdown in communication but there are crises and tensions. The author suggests that one of the major pastoral problems of the Church in the years to come will be precisely in this area. As to the wider implications it would seem, though Dr Brothers does not go beyond her brief to mention it, that interparochial secondary modern schools will also produce similar, if not so pronounced, social effects. This surely is a field where there is urgent need for sociological research for, as Dr Brothers remarks, 'what emerges most clearly is the interdependence of values and social structures'. The social structures are changing, or being changed, and producing their effects willy-nilly. It is to the advantage of all of us to know where we are going.

John Fitzsimons

THE DECLINE OF HELL by D. P. Walker; *Routledge and Kegan Paul, 35s.*

Recent discussions of the problem of Hell leave us ill-prepared for the issues which were the concern of those who are the basis for this book. For where the modern critics of this doctrine are prepared to ignore all authority, both ecclesiastical and scriptural, and to rely for their perception of the truth solely on the intuitions of 'morally sensitive' humanity, seventeenth-century theologians, whatever their moral sensitivity, had no such complete freedom. Modern rebels, in their objections to Hell, implicitly deny not only the outmoded physical descriptions of its tortures, nor even the irrevocability of its punishment, but also the whole idea of judgment and choice between individual members of erring humanity. The seventeenth-century rebels, shocked as they were by the idea of an *eternal* torment, were nevertheless not sufficiently 'emancipated' in the modern sense fully to deny the concept of justice. Nor, indeed, did they on the whole reject the possibility of suffering. True, some of the Anabaptists and Socinians denied the immortality of the wicked; but, as Mr Walker tells us, 'For all these merciful doctors, with the possible exception of some Anabaptists and Socinians, the wicked will receive punishment lasting several

thousand years and, in many systems, torments at least as severe as being burnt alive. This suggests that among the many possible motives for wishing to abolish the eternity of hell a revulsion from the thought of violent and prolonged suffering was not important.'

The difficulties which such theologians faced, compared to the *simpliste* conclusions of the humanistic critics of our own day (who often destroy, but seldom care to build up new hypotheses), led to their creating new systems for the after-life which were just as seemingly illogical as the system against which they were reacting, and which, moreover, had no real basis in scripture or in revelation. It is the variety and the extraordinary nature both of these systems and of their authors' arguments against orthodoxy which makes Mr Walker's book such excellent reading.

It is not only a fascinating book; it is an excellently documented piece of the history of ideas. There is only one fault which could possibly be found with it, and this is that there are occasional hints of a *parti pris* on the part of the author which naturally tend to detract from the value of a supposedly objective historical study.

Mrs Goffin, in her article in *Objections to Roman Catholicism*, writes: 'Both superstition and credulity are, in their application, relative terms. It would be grossly unfair and unhistorical to blame Abraham because he thought God could be propitiated by human sacrifice, or Pascal because he believed in the authenticity of the relic of the Crown of Thorns.'

Now, it would also be somewhat unfair to blame Christians of the seventeenth century for their somewhat physical and simple view of eternal torment; but Mr Walker does more than this. In a work devoted to the objective presentation of the ideas of a group of men of a previous age he produces remarks such as the following, which not only denies the doctrine of Hell, but ridicules some of the fundamental beliefs of a great section of twentieth-century mankind: 'The Redemption, original sin, retributive justice, and expiation by suffering – this complex of interrelated doctrines and ideas rests on an archaic and infantile moral assumption, namely that the bad consequences of an act can be annulled or compensated for by the suffering of the doer, or vicariously by someone else's suffering.'

Such lapses are infrequent, however, and the work as a whole not only widens our understanding of a whole section of sixteenth and seventeenth-century thought, but is fascinating in its own right as a picture of some extremes in religious thinking.

Richard Griffiths

WORDSWORTH AND THE POETRY OF SINCERITY by David Perkins; *Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 32s 6d.*

Sincerity entered the canon as a critical term comparatively late: with its questioning of a personal artistic integrity, its interest in the exactness of relationship between literary and actual experience, it presupposes in art an openness to ordinary moral criteria which is welcome. For Mr Perkins, sincerity is not an aspect of Wordsworth's poetry but a focal concept which integrates most of what can be said about Wordsworth: attitudes to language, theories of consciousness, syntax, audience relationship are all offered as relevant, and the most surprising thing is that this isn't, after all, sleight-of-hand, but a convincing study. There's a reflective chapter to begin with on the inherent difficulties of sincerity in art: language itself can filter and distort, an inevitable selectivity of experience may falsify, inherited conventions warp originality. A poem, as a made thing detached from the flux of consciousness, is already possibly a lie before it has said anything. A poetry of sincerity will tend to precision of solid experience, drawing its general truths from this; its diction will be non-ornamental, its syntax free and involved to get the sense of spontaneity – these are some of the deductions made in the abstract and, of course, with the

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