

DR. KIDD ON THE COUNTER-REFORMATION¹

Dr. Kidd's book on the Counter-Reformation is at once a delight and a disappointment. It is a delight because of the skill with which a wealth of knowledge and historical insight, together with a strong sympathy with the Catholic mentality of the sixteenth century, have been compressed and woven into the lucid, scholarly narrative of 262 pages. It is a disappointment because the author's strict following of the conventional treatment of the Counter-Reformation and his attempted adherence to an artificial chronological *terminus ad quem*, have prevented him from seeing all round his subject and from shedding any really new illumination upon it. Like most of his predecessors he begins with spirituality and ends with politics. At the beginning it is the Oratory of Divine Love, the new Orders, the *Exercises*, that confront the reader; at the end it is the details of wars, plots, and dynastic policies that hold the attention. The inevitable implication is not wholly justified. Though Dr. Kidd naturally sees that the Counter-Reformation was more than a mere reaction of medievalism against Protestantism, he is writing at the end as if the classification of territories lost or won, and by what external agencies, were the whole of his business. On any adequate interpretation of the Counter-Reformation—by which I mean one that recognizes in it a positive and potentially self-sufficient internal development of Catholicism, in touch with all the new forces of the sixteenth century, though undeniably much stimulated and indeed gravely modified by the fight against Protestantism; on any such interpretation, surely, for example, that wonderful and much studied flowering of French Catholicism in the early seventeenth century is as much, if not more, of its essence than the Wars of the League? Yet Dr. Kidd has practically finished with France once his very capable out-

¹ *The Counter-Reformation, 1550-1600*. By B. J. Kidd, D.D. (S.P.C.K.; pp. 271; 8/6.)

line of these wars has left a tolerant Catholic French monarchy stabilised under Henri Quatre; and the real revival of religion in France is dismissed in a perfunctory concluding paragraph. Similar treatment of something central as a mere epilogue occurs in the case of the Belgian counter-reformation. Again St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Sales, get only simple perfunctory mentions from which could hardly be suspected their enormous importance in the history of prayer and mysticism.

Nothing, of course, is more inept than to criticize a writer for not doing what he never set out to do, and it may be urged that Dr. Kidd is well within his rights in interpreting the Counter-Reformation—as he seems to have done—as simply the external methods and fortunes of Rome's counter-attack. I would submit that it is time we all realized that to study these in isolation from the general expansion and inward development that Catholicism itself was simultaneously undergoing in all its manifestations, and in response to Renaissance stimuli, is a false and misleading dichotomy which has long impeded the proper understanding of sixteenth century history. Thus the space ably and usefully devoted by Dr. Kidd in chapter IX to the varieties and internal disputes of Protestantism might even more usefully have been devoted to important general aspects of the Catholic revival left untouched or barely hinted at from time to time—its different schools of spirituality, its relations to Art, Humanism, Science, Learning, the work done for it by the revived Spanish Thomism, its reactions to the new political conditions and ideas of Renaissance Europe, its world-wide missionary and uniat-izing activity. A chapter on some such lines, which Dr. Kidd could have written with weight and learning, would not only have given his book greater breadth, but would have saved it from the occasional monotony which its sameness of approach is inclined to produce.

But within the limited treatment which Dr. Kidd has chosen to adopt, the range of his information, the freshness and succinctness of his writing, the balance of his judgments, are alike admirable. Nor must it be thought that

he is not throughout allusive to spiritual and theological forces. His last chapter, on Germany, is a very valuable summary, and his relation of Baltic events to the main European currents is exceptionally clearly managed. Throughout the book the predominant activity and power of the Jesuits is clearly brought out, and it is gratifying to see a general tribute paid to the work, often performed amidst enormous difficulties, of the papal legates, nuncios and agents. A book of this kind, however, can hardly be entirely free from errors. It is inaccurate to say, as Dr. Kidd does on page 81, that the legates at Trent surreptitiously added the words 'proponentibus ac' to 'praesidentibus legatis' in the opening decree between the first circulation of a draft for general approval and its adoption at the congregation of January 15th, 1562. It is true that in Paleotto's account the Spaniard Guerrero is set down as having made this accusation, but it is plain from Seripando's letters and other documents published by Susta and Ehses—to whose collections Dr. Kidd makes no reference—that the words in question had been in the draft from the beginning, and that Guerrero, so far from having made the accusation which Paleotto puts into his mouth, was at some pains to explain his subsequent disapproval of what he had originally been content to let pass. Again in neither the French nor the Imperial Libels of Reform (see page 90) was permission asked for 'Protestant ministers to administer the sacraments in default of the Catholic clergy,' and the general account given of these two documents is much more characteristic of the latter than of the former. I do not, moreover, think that Dr. Kidd has given enough stress to the importance in the Council of the controversy over the derivation of episcopal jurisdiction, and I have the impression that he underestimates the energy of many of the Italians when he says *tout court* that 'the victorious party, though consisting predominantly of Italians, owed its impetus to Spaniards.' The phrase that 'in 1595 several orthodox bishops . . . were received into the Roman Church' is hardly an adequate account of the Union of Brest, while to say that 'in 1559

BLACKFRIARS

the medieval papacy became extinct with the death of Paul IV ' implies an institutional break where all that can possibly be meant is the allegation that a certain kind of papal attitude to the world was never repeated.

Dr. Kidd's system of bibliographical reference, rich on certain occasions, is for the most part content with standard secondary authorities: Ranke, Pastor, Phillipson, Acton, Lodge, Ward, the Cambridge Modern History, the usual encyclopaedias. But on any system the documentary collections of Susta, Sickel and Constant ought to find a place besides Le Plat, Mendham and the Görresgesellschaft volumes in any up-to-date chapter on the Council of Trent, and it is disappointing to find no mention of the admirable works of M. Lucien Romier on French history from 1547 to 1562, to Pirenne or Geyl on the Netherlands, or to any of the big Jesuit Provincial Histories. In certain cases specific references for particular events or issues are given to older general authorities where fuller monographs or more modern special studies exist.

But when all these criticisms have been made, and most of them would probably collapse had the author provided some explanatory introduction, it remains that Dr. Kidd has given us a valuable book which is full of good things. It is a pleasure to welcome in these pages a work on the history of Catholicism from so eminent an Anglican divine, which may be read by Catholics with the greatest profit and without even the smallest momentary irritation.

H. OUTRAM EVENNETT.