

INFALLIBILITY IN THE CHURCH, An Anglican-Catholic Dialogue, by A. M. Farrer, Robert Murray, J. C. Dickinson, C. S. Dessain; foreword by M. D. Goulder. Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1968. 80 pp. 9s. 6d.

This welcome volume consists of papers read at a course sponsored by the Extra-Mural Studies Department of the University of Birmingham. Austin Farrer, in possibly his last published work, examines the control of Saving History upon the Church's faith. The Church's faith rests upon historic facts. But the Church has no right to be a 'fact factory': and yet for any living authority to be infallible it needs the charisma 'for miraculously knowing historical fact over the heads of the evidences, or, indeed, in default of any' (p. 12). In such a case the infallible interpreter of events 'is enlightened with regard to a fact for which he has no justifying evidence, by a direct fulguration of deity' (p. 13). Many things are said in the course of a rigorously honest examination, but the inevitable conclusion is that 'Catholic dogmatic thought about the saving facts is corrigible; and what is corrigible cannot be called infallible' (p. 22). As the foreword notes, this point is not taken up again. But Dr Farrer thinks this not the 'most vital' part of the infallibility idea. He then propounds a view of infallibility as 'an expression of the faith that God will effectively guide his Church in the way of truth and salvation'. This finds considerable response from a Congregationalist whose Church life has been patterned upon such a belief, yet who is convinced that he has much to learn from Orthodox, Catholics and Anglicans about that very truth.

Fr Robert Murray's magnificent contribution can be summed up in the form: Christ is infallible; the Church partakes in the nature of Christ; the Church therefore partakes of infallibility. He recognizes that the recognition of the Church's infallibility has not come about like that! but he does tellingly cite early Church witness to it. Even the definition of Papal infallibility at Vatican I was intended to be the first identification of the organs of the Church where the character was manifested. Vatican II has associated the College of Bishops as another organ with the exercise of infallibility. Fr Murray has made an immense contribution in his exposition of the body of the faithful as a third organ for the exercise of infallibility. The old idea of the *magisterium* of the Church having

an active, and the laity having a passive, infallibility is quite inadequate. Even when the Pope speaks infallibly, his words come to the believer not 'merely as a messenger to instruct him in his ignorance, but also as a mirror in which he "recognizes" the faith he holds' (p. 39). So 'What Roman Catholicism is painfully moving towards is a renewed vision of the Church as an organic unity, with functional organs in whom are concentrated, on occasion, the powers, priestly and prophetic, which Christ has given to the whole body' (p. 46).

Mr Dickinson has written a historical background to the debate about infallibility in the primitive, medieval and reformation Churches. Fr Dessain has provided a well-documented study of Newman's contribution to the problem in the days of Vatican I and in the Church where Cardinal Manning's influence was dominant. It is plain that even then there were many whose understanding of infallibility was, in the Warden of Keble's terms, 'God's guidance of his Church in the way of truth and salvation'.

Two comments from a Congregationalist reviewer. It is encouraging to think that if Vatican I defined the role of the Pope in the exercise of the Church's gift, and that if Vatican II placed alongside that the role of the College of Bishops, then it may well be that Vatican III will complete the task by defining the role of the body of the faithful. Congregationalists ought to feel at home in such a Church—unless their separate congregational experience of the guidance of God has so distorted their vision of the universal that they find other organs of authority strange. Moreover, if Rome may be said to have brought to this time the contribution of the first 'bishop', and the Anglicans the contribution of each bishop in his diocese, it may not be improper to suppose that Congregationalists (and their like) may have preserved some practice of the solidarity of bishops and laity in finding the way of God that does not lead to deception or unreality. But we shall not find the richness of our own traditions without being able to learn from all the others.

JOHN MARSH

A GUIDE TO RELIGIOUS TEACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE AND LITURGY, by a Group of Educationalists. Sands and Co. London, 1968, 374 pp. 30s.

This is a first translation, from the French, of a book which I found to be a most refreshing

approach to what has long been a difficult subject, especially from the teacher's point of view.