

Take one example. Plato in the *Phaedrus* argues that the soul is unborn, *agenetos*. This, Dr Pieper tells us, is the same as the later notion that a spiritual being is created immediately. This later notion, Dr Pieper tells us, p. 74: 'is not merely similar to Plato's; it is exactly the same'. Here the attempt to make Plato of constant and direct contemporary relevance appears at its most unlikable. Plato's understanding of the soul is entirely rooted in the history of fifth and fourth century thought. The soul of the *Phaedrus* is entirely different from a being which is 'created' by anything else; it is therefore still further removed from any notion of immediate creation. The situation is in fact considerably complex. Very briefly the point is that Plato's unborn soul is as much god as soul. Soul, it is true, is inferior to the Forms and therefore soul is not god in the sense of occupying the highest place in Plato's ontology. God, Aristotle's god and Plotinus' One, is in part

the result of a fusion of Plato's highest Forms, liberated from their function as concepts, and Plato's soul, liberated from performing the function of Aristotle's power of natural motion. Plato's soul is as much god as soul. It is as much creator as created.

Perhaps this is too elliptical even to begin to be illuminating. I make no apology. It does comparatively little good – I do not say it does no good at all – to read Plato in order to be reminded of a few eternal themes. Such an exercise carries the danger that we shall not think the problems out either in our own terms or in Plato's. We must approach Plato initially not with our own problems but with his. Not, it is true, that we should stop there. Familiarity with Plato's mind – a real, a *scholarly* familiarity – will help us in answering those further problems which Plato's own achievements have brought us to the verge of.

Denis O'Brien

MARY'S PLACE IN THE CHURCH by René Laurentin, translated by I. G. Pidoux. Foreword by Hilda Graef. *Burns and Oates, 12s 6d.*

During the last few years a number of books on the Blessed Virgin Mary by continental Catholic writers have appeared in English translations; Fr Louis Bouyer's *Woman and Man with God*, Fr Yves Congar's *Christ, our Lady and the Church*, Fr Karl Rahner's *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, Fr Hugo Rahner's *Our Lady and the Church*, Fr Otto Semmelroth's *Mary, Archetype of the Church* and Fr E. H. Schillebeeckx's *Mary, Mother of the Redemption* are among the most notable of these. In spite of their differences of approach all these authors have one thing in common; they are determined that mariology shall not be sealed off from other branches of theology in an impermeable capsule but shall be seen as an integral part of the great corpus of Christian doctrine, related to and interpenetrating all its main divisions. Abbé Laurentin's book is of a different type from these; they are works of mariology, his is a work about mariology. More precisely it is an account of the various trends in contemporary mariological thought and practice and an assessment of their

nature and significance.

Starting from the overwhelming mass of books, articles, conferences, societies and pious associations, many of them of very dubious or mediocre quality, concerned with the increase of devotion to our Lady and the expansion of Marian theology, Abbé Laurentin frankly voices his 'grounds for disquiet', a disquiet which is mainly due to the narrow specialization of marian studies and cultus and their lack of organic relationship to the thought and life of the Church as a whole. Noting that the marian movement has undergone its extraordinary efflorescence in a polemical and even political setting, he points to the odd fact that those who are most enthusiastic for evolution and development in mariology are frequently conservative or even reactionary in their attitude to dogma as a whole. Seeking the golden mean between 'maximizing' and 'minimizing' (concepts whose propriety in theology he questions in any case, since theology should be concerned simply with the truth) he sees the key to lie in placing our

Lady in her true relationship to God, to Christ and to the Church. Judged by this criterion, the books which I have mentioned above come out in the first class.

Turning to the ecumenical problem Abbé Laurentin, rather along the lines of Fr Bouyer's *Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, sees the Reformation principles of *Scriptura sola, gratia sola, fides sola* and *Deus solus* as expressing valid and vital insights whose anti-Marian application was conditioned by the nominalist and extrinsecist assumptions of the late medieval outlook; as regards Eastern Orthodoxy, with Dr John Meyendorff he sees the main difficulty to lie in a different understanding of original sin.

The balance and sanity of Abbé Laurentin's book make it worthy of close attention from

Catholics and Protestants alike; he is ruthless where ruthlessness is called for but never destructive and always understanding and penetrating. The French edition left his hands on 15th November, 1963, when the crisis produced by the vote of October 29th in the Vatican Council was still unresolved; in the English translation he was able to refer to the promulgation of the Constitution *De Ecclesia* on November 21st, and to the Papal utterance that followed it. I do not know whether Abbé Laurentin, himself a *peritus* of the Council, had any part in the drafting of Chapter VIII, *De Beata Maria Virgo Deipara in mysterio Christi et Ecclesiae*, but I am sure that he must have rejoiced at its adoption. The translation is admirable.

E. L. Mascall

THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE 1453 by Steven Runciman; *Cambridge University Press, 35s.*

At least in the judgment of this reviewer, Sir Steven Runciman is the greatest of living English historians. In an age of miniaturists he retains the power to paint on a wide canvas but he does so with a miniaturist skill and precision of detail; his only parallel is Dom David Knowles. His *Fall of Constantinople* is a sequel to his studies of the Latin principality in the east and the *Sicilian Vespers*. It only lacks their significance since the ground was already covered so admirably by Edwin Pears in his great book *The Destruction of the Greek Empire and the Story of the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks*; still that was published in 1903 and is hard to procure. Perhaps Sir Steven slightly overstates the inevitability of the fall. It seems likely that the Turks had never expected so fierce or so successful a resistance. On Saturday the 25th of May Halil Pasha the Vizier had urged the abandonment of the siege. If in the early hours of the morning of Tuesday the 29th the Emperor had succeeded in beating back the third wave of the final assault it seems probable that the city would have been saved.

How long would it have survived? It is tenable that individual effort can only accelerate or retard the inevitable historic process. But there was

nothing in Byzantine civilization that suggested that it was ripe for destruction. It had never been so vital in so many fields as in the fifteenth century. Perhaps the young Sultan Muhammad II destroyed it prematurely. Possibly it should have come to its natural end in the sixteenth century under Sulaiman the Magnificent when the discovery of the sea route had abolished the economic function of Constantinople, and its suburbs Galata and Pera as the entrepôt of the far-eastern trade passing from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. In 1453 an Indian Ocean trade in spices and pepper was flowing to the head of the Persian Gulf and then over-land to Trebizond, while a main trade route to the far east led from Caffa in the Crimea. The ships from Caffa and from Trebizond had to pass through the Bosphoros and the Turks might have been content to gather toll from them from the new castle at Rumeli Hissar.

If Constantine XI had prolonged the history of the Empire for a generation only, the effect might have been momentous. The fall of Constantinople had very little influence on the development of the Italian renaissance but its survival might have transformed it. The intellectual prestige of Byzantium had never been higher in the west than in