

everyday teaching and directives of the Church. And very rightly, a stress is laid on the importance of the literary forms of various books.

If only this lively little book can help to break down that stolid indifference to Scripture which is no credit to so many 'average' Catholics in this country, then it will have more than justified its production.

R.D.P.

D. H. LAWRENCE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE. By William Tiverton.  
Foreword by T. S. Eliot. (Rockliff; 12s. 6d.)

In effect this is a Christian defence of Lawrence, an assertion of the religious value of his work. Fr Tiverton (the pseudonym of a member of an Anglican religious order) mixes literary criticism and biography with his reflections on the course of Lawrence's life and writings, but fundamentally he is concerned to discover points of contact between Lawrence and Christianity. And so doing he is certainly asking for trouble. Most of Lawrence's interpreters—Murry, Kinsmill, Leavis, etc.—heartily disagree among themselves; but they would probably unite against this new-comer. And one wonders what Lawrence himself would say. . . . This question of course is, in a sense, irrelevant; but the doubt it implies returns persistently despite Fr Tiverton's persuasiveness. For this book is after all one-sided. It is special pleading. Not that it is useless; on the contrary, it is decidedly useful; the work of a critic possessed of considerable talent, writing with intelligence as well as sympathy. Only, the sympathy slightly out-weighs the critical intelligence.

It is hard to be judicious about Lawrence. He was so vulnerable as a man, and even as an artist. And he has been so sentimentally admired. Both spite and sentimentality have been lavished on him. Yet it is better to give him sympathy, at the risk of sentimentalising, than merely to enjoy a laugh at his expense with Kinsmill or Wyndham Lewis. For without sympathy Lawrence's peculiar gift cannot even be recognised, much less appreciated; since it consists, not in any technique, but in an original, passionate intuition. He had many gifts, but his peculiar power lay in apprehending reality *un*-rationally; in being extraordinarily aware of non-rational modes of being—the life of plants, animals and human feeling. Hence, in part at least, his obsession with sex. Hence, too, his religion with all its truth and all its falsehood; the religion of the blood, the assertion of the sacredness of the non-mental. 'We can go wrong in our minds. But what the blood feels, and believes, and says, is always true.' This is the fundamental statement, rightly and (what is more) sympathetically stressed by Fr Tiverton. The greatness, the real nobility and tragedy of Lawrence

consisted in his awareness of and fidelity to the implications and consequences of that statement. But what does it imply? And what is the truth that the blood 'says' and that Lawrence saw?

I wish that Fr Tiverton had answered these questions more clearly. He might then have evaluated more precisely, in relation to the general lawrentian attitude, those magnificent assertions, belonging mostly to Lawrence's later years, about God and marriage and death, on which Fr Tiverton insists because they support his thesis. As it is, we are left rather hazy about their meaning for Lawrence himself, and uncomfortably aware that they *are* being insisted upon at the expense of other, quite contradictory, assertions which, without being excluded, are left rather in the shade. Nor is the fact squarely faced that the intuition which made (so to say) Lawrence a genius was also, in effect, his curse: his work shows a fearful deviation towards the despairing semi-lunacy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Lawrence's motives in writing this book may have been noble and religious; objectively it represents a spiritual collapse. Until this fact is fully admitted one is still touching only part of the problem. Lawrence is a tragic character. To say this is not to deny outright his claim to be regarded not only as the religious man that he certainly was, but as one whose religion was fundamentally bearing in the right direction. There is much to support this view of him. But other conflicting factors, abundantly documented, enter in to complicate and deepen the case. Had Fr Tiverton dealt adequately with these he would have written an important book, not only an interesting and attractive one. Even as it is (with its characteristic Foreword by Mr Eliot) it deserves to be read by everyone who reads Lawrence. It contributes something fresh; it is generous and deeply suggestive.

I must add that the allusion to St Thomas on p. 82 is inexact. St Thomas does not teach that 'enjoyment' of the sexual act (in marriage) is a sin, in the sense that the *only* enjoyment permitted is 'delight . . . in what will be the fruit of the act'. In the article apparently referred to (but the reference is confused) St Thomas expressly refuses to identify sexual pleasure itself with sin. (II-II, 153, 2 *ad* 2; and cf. I, 98, 2 *ad* 3.)

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