

SCRIPTURAL BULLETIN

A recently translated work by Bishop Felder¹ makes a sort of counterpart to his long established work known in its English version as *Christ and the Critics*. He resumes his defence of the New Testament against these same critics and certain of their descendants. But he is now more concerned to be constructive, and the most substantial part of the book is designed to portray the character of Christ according to the Gospels and to provide a synthesis of the New Testament doctrine concerning the messianic rôle and the divinity of Christ. The material thus assembled is of great value; and the spirit of the book is impressive and powerfully edifying. It can be strongly recommended to pious readers. As a work of biblical science, however, or quite simply as a piece of writing, it is not so commendable. Neglect of the historical aspect of the New Testament introduces something of flatness, of text-bookish deadness into the treatment of the doctrine. And the apologetics are defective in several ways. There is a want of sympathetic understanding of the position of opponents, and even a certain want of controversial integrity. It is difficult to grasp the point of view that, 'In the entire history of the intellectual development of man there is hardly a disaster of more frightful tragedy than the collapse of the rationalistic criticism of the gospel and of Jesus.' Elsewhere the discomfiture of the critics can be contemplated more cheerfully: 'To-day serious scientists, and even light-footed poets, have at most a compassionate smile for all these clever little essays of rationalistic memory.'

A far more judicious account of the 'collapse' of the destructive N.T. criticism is contained in Père Braun's *L'Évangile devant les Temps Présents*.² Very slight in volume, it has the verve and realistic purpose of a proper pamphlet, but it also displays a scientific mastery of its subject. Its aim is to proclaim the strength of the Catholic position in N.T. criticism, to show that science as such does not threaten it. Through not realizing this many Catholics are victims of a subtle inferiority complex. It is not science, but certain philosophic attitudes and vague popular moods attendant thereon that have engen-

¹ *Jesus of Nazareth*. By the Most Rev. Bishop H. Felder, D.D., O.M. Cap. (Geo. E. J. Coldwell, Ltd., London; 10s. 6d.)

² (Desclée de Brouwer, Paris.)

dered scepticism about the validity of the New Testament. Père Braun gives a new heartening significance to this by no means original contention. He discusses the improvement of intellectual conditions for the impact of the Gospels that has been brought about by the revival of realist and spiritualist forms of philosophy and by the decay of liberalism, and goes on to indicate the authentic lines of the Gospel challenge and the possibilities of its attaining a more dynamic influence.

In Père Braun's review of the biblical situation there is one notable omission. He has nothing to say about that most modern and fashionable attack on the Gospels that proceeds from the more radical exponents of the method of Form-criticism. This is all the more surprising inasmuch as he had treated of this subject with great skill and success in his former work, *Où en est le Problème de Jésus* (a work that, in passing, one would like to recommend very emphatically). There is a recent book,³ however, by Canon Redlich, in which an excellent account is given of the workings and the implications of this system and of the grounds upon which its destructive conclusions can be refuted. The first pretence of this Form-criticism is to be able to discredit the organic historic construction of the Gospels; to show that the Gospels—even that of St. Mark—are merely factitious collections of data that existed originally in oral tradition as isolated units—as independent anecdotes, aphoristic sayings, etc. It is supposed that these units originated pragmatically, being devised or invented by the Christian community as occasion prompted, to serve for purposes of missionary preaching, controversy, worship, etc. Their various stereotyped forms enable them to be classified and attached to these several original purposes, and according as these purposes are conjectured to have been more or less primitive in the history of the Church so are these units ranged in order of antiquity. Those which purport to convey information about the life of Christ are placed comparatively late!

In another recent work⁴ Canon Redlich treats of the still more difficult subject of the historic value and the authenticity of St. John's Gospel. Here it must be said that the achievement is less satisfactory: whether viewed technically, as a work

³ *Form Criticism. Its Value and Limitations.* By Basil Redlich, B.D. (Duckworth; 6s.)

⁴ *An Introduction to the Fourth Gospel.* By E. Basil Redlich. (Longmans; 5s.)

of exposition, or doctrinally—from the point of view of Catholic orthodoxy. One would disagree with his summing up of the internal evidence of the Gospel, with his account of the interpretative historical licence employed by the author, and at various points one would challenge his line of argument. There is one very surprising statement attributing to St. John the part of having first introduced the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Nevertheless, the spirit of the book and its main conclusions are by no means subversive, and it would prove useful and stimulating to any one who knew how to check its argument. The historicity of the Gospel is meant to be substantially safeguarded. The immediate authorship is not conceded to St. John; but he is credited with an indirect authorship which makes him responsible for the whole substantial matter of the book.

The symposium consisting of the papers that were read at last year's Cambridge Summer School⁵ make an excellent text-book of introduction to the Old Testament. Less technical than the usual text-book, more doctrinally constructive. The whole course of the biblical history is briefly expounded, the subjects of prophecy, messianism, canonicity, ethics are dealt with. Less inevitably, but most appropriately, there are papers devoted to the doctrine of Wisdom, to the Liturgy, to the findings at Ras Shamra, to the Psalter. If one may resort to negative criticism—it seems regrettable that no account is given of the meaning and the value of the mystical or typical sense of the Scriptures; and further that there should be so little provision of bibliographical information. This is to lose a great opportunity of introducing the faithful to the resources of Catholic biblical literature. Concerning the actual contents of the book, only one pugnacious criticism suggests itself; which is, that in the matter of the correspondences of the biblical and the Babylonian account of the Creation, etc., the only explanation offered should be that of the existence of a primitive revelation which had become corrupted in pagan tradition but was handed down in its integrity to the Hebrews.

The well-known manual of Introduction to the Scriptures by the late Dom Höpfl, O.S.B.⁶—a work of the greatest value,

⁵ *The Old Testament. Cambridge Summer School Lectures.* With a Preface by Father C. Lattey, S.J. (Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

⁶ P. H. Höpfl, O.S.B.: *Introductio Specialis in Novum Testamentum.* Editio Quarta ex integro retractata, Quam curavit P. Benno Gut, O.S.B., A.L.C.I. (Anonima Libreria Cattolica Italiana. Roma. L.36.)

easily supreme in its kind—is in process of being re-edited and re-fashioned. The volume of special introduction to the New Testament is the first to appear in this new form. The original has been entirely re-written. If there be no improvement in the Latinity, certainly a great improvement in clarity, accuracy and general serviceableness has been effected; with the further advantages of a better typographical arrangement and more carefully planned headings and divisions. A good deal of new matter has been worked into the text, and the bibliography has been revised and brought up to date.

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NOTICES

COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM. A Study in the Technique of Revolution. By Arnold Lunn. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 6s.)

As a critic of the technique of revolution Mr. Lunn is handicapped by a bland insensibility to the desirability of revolution itself. His manifest lack of enthusiasm for the end tends to weaken our confidence in his disinterestedness as a critic of the means. Moreover, the effect of his strictures on the Trojan Horse tactics of the Third International in this book may be considerably negated by his subsequent efforts in *The Tablet* to induce us to second our Government's wooings of this erratic war-engine. But Mr. Lunn's indifference to the needs and aspirations of the working-class movement should not blind us to the findings of his indefatigable researches into the seamy side of working-class leadership, nor the evident relish he takes in mud-raking and mud-slinging to the fact that he shows the mud to be exceedingly muddy. Readers with the patience to abstract from the amateurishness of the book's criticisms of dialectical materialism, from the naïveté of its economics, from the complacency of its class-unconsciousness, from its raucous bluster and ponderous facetiousness, will find in it a mass of valuable documentation on Left politics and politicians. But it is to be feared that for most readers the book will have little effect but to embitter the class-hatreds and class-conflicts it righteously deplores.

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