

REVIEWS

THE TRINITY AND CHRISTIAN DEVOTION. By Charles W. Lowry. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 4s. 6d.)

The need for correlating the life of prayer and the intellectual life is as urgent as it is modern. Lack of systematic teaching, many believe, is responsible for any excessive outcrop of irrelevant devotions which distract the soul from the fundamental principles of Christian theology and bring about a disintegrating rift between prayer and life. Not that we imagine St Augustine or St Thomas settling down to half an hour's meditation neatly planned in a cut-and-dried fashion and based on the *Confessions* or the *Summa*. Prayer is not a supplementary exercise in speculative theology; but if it is to be fruitful, that is to say, if it is to provide the best natural basis on which grace can mould the Christian character, it must proceed from the dogmas of the Church in much the same way that a skilled craftsman's work will, instinctively rather than consciously, be directed by his knowledge of his tools and materials.

Dr Lowry attempts in this book to start the work of reconciliation from the most fundamental of all dogmas, the Trinity; the Christian life is ultimately a reflection of the internal life of the Godhead. Taking an eclectic stand he considers the true relation of doctrine and devotion, looks for statements of the doctrine of the Trinity in the history of the church, and then sets out to define the doctrine itself. The early part of the book offers several neat and unbiassed summaries of the teaching of various 'leaders of thought' from Arius to Hegel, and this impartiality is representative of the book as a whole. Its scale of values is so vaguely outlined that on some pages the reader is compelled to ask whether any dogmas are accepted at all. Eclecticism has that quality. This must account for a statement which, on its face value (and it appears in its context to have no other), is startling: 'Christian thought today has either to base itself on the Athanasian position or go back to the beginning and work out something like Arianism or simple adoptionism' (p. 63). This follows close after a defence of the teaching of St Athanasius.

What partiality there is favours subjective definitions. Religion 'is a form of experience. It is primarily a sense or feeling or consciousness' (p. 14). This is the starting point for the investigation of dogma. Again, devotion is 'feeling within one's being the reality and knowing within one's will the force of

"that devotedness, in short,

Which I account the ultimate in man". (p. 103.)

And 'Christianity, it has been said, is the experience of belonging to Jesus Christ' (p. 105). The difficulty seems to be that in a book

which demands a dogmatic basis there is no final objective court of appeal in which to seek dogmas, and it is not surprising to find Wordsworth the poet-theologian par excellence: 'He was right psychologically in his understanding of religion and religious experience' (p. 14).

Nevertheless many important terms are not given even a subjective definition. Freedom—we are left to chew on this: 'The attribute of freedom is qualified by the impulse to surrender and obey' (p. 47). Original sin is neither expressly affirmed nor denied, biblical inspiration and revelation are confused and sketchily analysed and, oddest of all in a treatise *De Deo Trino*, analogy is only dimly outlined: 'It is more reasonable to face and accept the fact that every resort to analogy in trying to think about God ends in symbolic and mythical representation than it is to pretend that pure reason yields valid and satisfactory conclusions in theology' (pp. 95-6). However, as it weaves a 'way deftly if clumsily between the Scylla of extreme Protestantism and the Charybdis of unmitigated Catholicism' (p. 76), this book has something which Dr G. M. Trevelyan assures us is common to Shakespeare and Elizabethan England, 'an attitude to religion that is not primarily Catholic or Protestant, Puritan or Anglican, but evades dogma and lives broadly in the spirit'.

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HIPPOLYTE DE ROME: LA TRADITION APOSTOLIQUE. Edited by Dom B. Botte, O.S.B. Sources Chrétiennes, 11. (Editions du Cerf; 70 fr.)

For those who are not specialists in textual criticism, this edition will be most welcome. It contains the Latin text of the *Apostolic Tradition*, together with a French translation, in which the gaps in the Latin version are filled from the Sahidic, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions. There are adequate notes on the text thus supplied. A concise introduction outlines the history of the text and gives some account of the principal Church Orders and the editions of the *Apostolic Tradition*. The editor is abreast of the most recent work on Hippolytus. The French translation is not always satisfactory; for example, the rendering of the blessing of cheese and olives weakens its significance by a too great freedom. Otherwise this is an addition to the series *Sources Chrétiennes* which should be popular among students of the liturgy. The format is good, as always in this collection.

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