for a justice more complete than any human court can administer; and for justice *against* himself. For if he had not physically killed his wife, he had willed to be rid of her. Yet his pride is still strong enough in the last scene to re-will her death; and simultaneously human justice re-acquits and divine justice condemns him. Yet he is not damned; his old pride and new love combine to reverse the sentence with reasons which theology could not approve—as if man's freedom were cancelled did God hold him to the consequence of his use of it.

Theologically this is a blemish; yet one remembers the play with joy and gratitude. It has moments of thrilling and piercing beauty. It conveys a sense of realities more real than matter and more just than the human soul. Yet the world of matter and man is *there*—not effaced. Betti is a poet on two planes at once; that is his importance. And the enthusiastic and intelligent performance of his work by a handful of undergraduates is, I suggest, encouraging.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

REVIEWS

CHRIST AND THE CAESARS: HISTORICAL SKETCHES. By E. Stauffer. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

Why did Caesar, in the person of Constantine the Great, suddenly capitulate to Christ and make the persecuted faith of a small minority of his subjects a *religio licita* and ultimately the official creed of his empire? That is one of the most significant questions of all time; and the purpose of this book is to offer an answer to it. Here the story of the first three centuries of our era is painted in the terms of conflict between falsehood and truth, between two opposing gospels of salvation, the cycle of heaven-sent rulers and the final advent of the Son of Man, the imperial myth of the divine emperor and the fact of the Incarnate Word. It was to Truth itself that Caesar submitted.

Every Christian will assent to this antithesis and verdict. No Christian can fail to be profoundly moved by the deep conviction and sincerity with which Professor Stauffer portrays the freshness, clarity, vitality, seriousness, purity, and confidence of our faith as seen against the background of the staleness, confusion, effeteness, cynicism, 'dirt', and disillusionment that were one aspect of the world into which it came. It was the Faith that saved the classical ideals of freedom, courage, truth, beauty, married love, joy, and clemency (the last being Julius

Caesar's watchword). It saved, too, the 'European concept of empire' (p. 277). For Augustus had followed the 'will of history' and the unified world-state that he founded had a mission which was acknowledged by its victims, by the Fathers, martyrs, and bishops of the early Church, by St Paul, and by our Lord himself. 'To pay the imperial tax means to fulfil God's will for history', comments the author (p. 131) on the story of the tribute-money in one of the most penetrating chapters in his book. A synthesis of authority and freedom was the basic, if by no means consistently realized, principle on which the Roman empire was built.

Nevertheless, despite this recognition of Augustus' achievement, Professor Stauffer's picture of imperial history is, like that of Tacitus, highly selective. Antony, Cleopatra, Nero, Domitian, Commodus, and the blood-stained series of third-century soldier-emperors are so vividly delineated and occupy so large a share of the foreground that readers whose first introduction this is to the system of the empire might well marvel how so colossal a sham and humbug, so empty a husk of lying propaganda, could have held mankind and endured for several centuries. We hear next to nothing of the 'good' emperors, of Vespasian, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, or of the other side of the medal—the real peace and prosperity, the release from fear, poverty, and insecurity, the social services, and humanitarianism that characterized the age even of 'bad' emperors in the first and second centuries. Some emperors, at least, deserved, in some sense, the name of 'saviours' of the peoples whom they served; and the peoples were rightly and sincerely grateful to their benefactors.

Emperor-worship is a highly complicated phenomenon, more complicated and more difficult to judge justly than readers of this book might be led to suspect. Divine honours were not always demanded for himself by a ruler, whether as a means of self-gratification, or of enhancing his personal prestige, or of enforcing unity throughout his dominions. Such honours were, indeed, sometimes actually refused by emperors, during the first century at any rate, or forced on them against their wills by spontaneous outbursts of popular enthusiasm—facts which the author never mentions. No sane emperor believed in his personal godhead: he had, like every normal person, too strong an intimation of his own mortality and creature-hood. But both the emperor and his subjects clung to belief in the divine power that his office represented, in *Dea Roma* and *Roma Aeterna*: as the embodiment of Rome, the 'apostolic succession' of emperors was held to be both sacred and eternal.

The 'bad' and mad emperors undoubtedly claimed and accepted godhead for themselves during their life-time. In a striking chapter

Professor Stauffer unfolds a cogent case for interpreting the Apocalypse as the direct Christian answer to—or rather, a kind of 'divine parody' of—the provincial cult of the 'god' Domitian which St John had witnessed at first hand at Ephesus. The cipher 666 stands for Domitian: he is 'the Beast'. Yet not all emperors were 'beasts' and few were directly and openly worshipped as fully-fledged deities. No living emperor, not even the 'baddest' and maddest, had a temple in Rome itself. *Consecratio*, which often denoted the 'canonization' of a worthy and efficient ruler, implied that an emperor or empress only became divine at death; and then they were *divus* or *diva*, not *deus* or *dea*. Aurelian's numismatic title, *deus et dominus natus*, was a quite abnormal aberration of the imperial mint-master (p. 248). It is not true that Diocletian and Maximian styled themselves Jupiter and Hercules (pp. 255, 257). They were *Jovius* and *Herculeus*, Jupiter's and Hercules' own, the protégés, or, at most, the representatives, of these time-honoured patrons of the Roman State, whose cult enjoyed a marked revival on the very eve of the dawn of the Christian empire. The author asserts too sweepingly that the religion of the old gods had everywhere ceased to be taken seriously (p. 207).

In this context of emperor-worship it should be observed that Professor Stauffer tends to do less than justice to the uniqueness of the doctrine of the Incarnation when compared with pagan theories of divine epiphany in human shape, and to its part in the victory of Christ over Caesar (pp. 215-6). The man-made-god won divinity by virtue of becoming ruler or, at his advent, 'made manifest' some god, or gods, of mythology: divine origin was credited to him as an after-thought. Christ, the God-made-Man, is a human being hypostatically united, from his conception, to the Eternal Word; and his life and death were the pledge of a selfless, all-embracing love for man such as had never been heard of before and had never been predicated of any pagan ruler or 'saviour'-deity. Hence his unique appeal to the mind and heart of humanity.

Another category of pagan faiths, the influence of which Professor Stauffer underestimates, is that of the mysteries (p. 207). He seems, for instance, to have missed the spirit of genuine devotion which informs the vision of Isis in the last book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. The mysteries, like the emperors, offered 'salvation', not, however, 'collective security' in the political or social order, but personal immortality and life abundant for the individual soul in paradise. Not death's triumph (p. 283), but the soul's victory over it, was the chief theme of third-, as of second-, century sarcophagi. Victory and eternal life are the leitmotifs of Roman imperial funerary art, of the sculptures, stuccoes, paintings, and mosaics of the tombs recently

found beneath St Peter's, for example. There we have evidence, moreover, of the adoption, adaptation, and 'baptism' by Christians of much of this wealth of pagan other-world imagery, to express the faith and hope which answered and fulfilled the longings of the pagans for salvation, while rejecting as false the mythological 'saviours' in whom the pagans trusted. The author tells us nothing of this Christian use of pagan art-forms, although it provides a close and illuminating parallel to that conscious (?) modelling of Christian liturgical language and ceremonial on their counterparts at the imperial court, which he has so persuasively demonstrated (pp. 250–3).

Some of Professor Stauffer's *obiter dicta* call for challenge or comment. For instance, *philopator* and *philometor* surely mean 'loving', not 'beloved by', father or mother (p.63).It is, to say the least of it, extremely disputable whether the wooden object, the scar of which was found on the wall of a house at Herculaneum, was a cross (p. 147). The evidence for an actual persecution of Christians in Rome by Domitian is very tenuous. We do not know for certain that the exiled Acilius Glabrio, Clemens, and Domitilla were Christians (p. 164); and the persecution described in St Clement's letter to Corinth is that, not of Domitian, but of Nero, under whom St Peter and St Paul suffered martyrdom. *Saeculum* in classical Latin means, not 'century', but 'age' (p. 228). A recent article (in the B. Schweitzer *Festschrift*, 1954) has shown that the effaced portrait in the Berlin Severan miniature is that of Caracalla, not of Geta (p. 230). We have no archaeological evidence supporting certain vague literary statements to the effect that the Church possessed 'spacious basilicas' before the time of Constantine (p. 252): the 'house-church' would appear to have been still the normal form of assembly-place during the third century. The Virgilian echo in the British emperor, Carausius', coin-legend, *Expectate, veni* (p. 256), is paralleled in Virgilian allusions on fourth-century Romano-British mosaic pavements from Lullingstone in Kent and Low Ham in Somerset: we need not suspect that it was lost on that tough Augustus. The ship shown on the famous gold medallion struck for Constantius Chlorus' advent in London (frontispiece) is no 'holy ship' (p. 257), but simply a troop-ship with men-at-arms on board.

The seventeen plates are excellent in quality and many of them are unusual in content. One of the outstanding features of the book is the extent to which coin-types and coin-legends have been drawn upon to illustrate points of imperial propaganda and policy. The coins provide a rich mine of information, in which historians of the Roman empire still delve all too rarely: they would do well to follow Professor Stauffer's lead. But criticism will not be disarmed by the lame explanation, proffered in the author's preface, of the almost total exclusion of

references and notes. Experts would have welcomed precise documentation of at least such less familiar monuments as the temple and sculptures of the imperial cult of Ephesus (p. 166 ff.), the quasi-Christian copper coinage of Abgar the Great of Edessa (p. 264 ff.), and the coins with the cross of Theodora, wife of Constantine I, and of Maxentius (pp. 268-9). And the author is wrong in believing that adequate references and notes (if unobtrusively gathered together at the end of each chapter or at the end of a book) frighten off the non-expert, who, if interested and stimulated, as he surely will be by this volume, is often anxious to probe further.

The foregoing criticisms have suggested that *Christ and the Caesars* betrays certain blemishes and shortcomings. But these must not be regarded as in any sense neutralizing the fundamental merits of this powerful, bracing, and in many ways remarkable study. Its achievement is to have stressed new aspects of the history, life, and practice of the early Church, and to have offered fresh food for meditation on the minds and activities of her Apostles John and Paul and on the words and person of her Founder.

J. M. C. TOYNBEE

AESTHETICS AND LANGUAGE. Edited with an Introduction by William Elton. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell; 21s.)

This volume, offering 'a fresh, unbiassed scrutiny of the linguistic confusions of traditional aesthetics', demands a philosopher's review, which I am not competent to give it. But I cannot refrain from commenting on the conception of 'aesthetics' and of the subject-matter of 'aesthetics' which most of the contributors have in common. This conception is inadequate. None of the writers seems to be aware of the grounds for or the nature of responsible critical judgments about any work of art. They examine only the 'logical behaviour' of words commonly used in off-hand or otherwise haphazard remarks about art, literature, etc. This study is in itself quite legitimate, but it is not legitimate to assume, without discussing or even showing awareness of the assumption, that it is a study of 'aesthetics' or of criticism. We have here, then, the curious spectacle of a strenuous intellectual discipline exercised in support of conceptions of art and literature appropriate for the Beaverbrook Press—for a *milieu* in which your taste is as good as mine, whoever you are, and criticism belongs with chorus-fancying. Perhaps positivist convictions necessarily go with a guileless faith in 'the common man'—whatever *he* may be. At any rate, the contributors show themselves to be as remote as any 'traditional aesthetician' from