

REVIEWS

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

RELIGION AND HISTORY. By James Clark McKerrow, M.B.
(Longmans, Green & Co.; 6/- net.)

Two studies in evolution, one secular, one religious. The author's first essay is the application to society of his thesis concerning the individual. The social organism is represented as having evolved—'it is absurd to . . . say that any social development was on the wrong tack' (p. 63)—into democracy, the state in which men are actually and not in a remote acosmist sense, equal and, since the democratic condition is the religious condition and 'man became man in becoming religious' (p. 80), are really men; while religion, 'secular in the ancient world, too much divorced from secular affairs in the modern world hitherto' (p. 72) is seen as providing 'the nations with a higher principle of unity than that of economic expediency' (p. 73). One might well be in whole-hearted agreement with such a conclusion while disagreeing violently with the steps which the author takes to prove it: the political 'equality of man,' to take only one small example, might be thought to have been by this time sufficiently exploded.

The second essay treats of the evolution of Christianity. Here again one finds oneself in violent disagreement with many of the author's statements (it is a pity, perhaps, that he confines himself to the authority of encyclopaedias, Britannica, Hastings, Catholic); as an example one may note the phrase 'the decline in morals from the Puritanism of Gnostic Christianity to the compromise with the moral standards of the world of Catholic Christianity,' where alike the statement of fact and the implicit implication of theory (that puritanism is a high ethical standard) ought at least to be backed up by an attempt at substantiation. The author's primary purpose is here, it would seem, to make the essence of Christianity acceptable to modern humanity by returning to its Gnostic formulation and ridding it of the ex-crescence of the historical Christ (the essence of Catholicity, according to Mr. McKerrow, it may be noted, is 'organization,' p. 177) there is no adversion to the fact that by thus denying Christology, the Redemption, its place as the essence of the Christian faith, the latter is robbed precisely of that personalness which removes it from the Kantian rigorism of mere deontology, while at the same time, what is more fundamental, the whole propaedeutica which traditionally and actually is seen to validate the *rationabile obsequium* of the Catholic creed is swept away. One regrets, further, the lack of definition of terms (what, e.g., is meant by the 'orthodox view,' or the 'bastard

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sense of supernatural'), for which the author's habit of enclosing phrases in inverted commas does not compensate.

For one thing one may be sincerely grateful: the book is a happy antidote to the spirit of Whiggism in history whether secular or religious; and Mr. McKerrow's main thesis is well worth studying if only for its challenge to the tendency to sink too somnolently into traditional ruts.

L.S.G.V.

PRECIS DE PATROLOGIE ET D'HISTOIRE DE LA THEOLOGIE. By F. Cayrée. Two vols. (Desclée, Tournai; 12.60 Belgas.)

These two volumes may be said without exaggeration to form the best manual for Catholic students. The first three sections culminate in St. John Damascene, St. Theodore the Studite, and the Iconoclastic controversy. The last section which is much briefer in treatment deals with the period between the 12th and 16th centuries. The value of the book lies in its attempt to be integral: the fathers are not treated as individuals who produced tiresome lists of works, but as men with a doctrine and a spiritual life. The bibliographies are sufficient although the author would have gained considerably if he had consulted more English Patrologists. There are certain lacunae—*e.g.*, the doctrine of St. Ignatius of Antioch on the Mystical Body and the doctrine of St. Irenaeus on the Eucharist are scarcely mentioned and we suspect that the author is too preoccupied by his own mystical doctrine—valuable though it is. On the whole, however, the book is a success, and the student who uses it carefully and follows out its references will provide himself with an admirable background for this most important locus in the study of theology.

A.M.

NOTRE-DAME A NAZARETH. (Editions du Cerf, Juvisy).

Three well-known writers contribute to this—the third—fascicule of *Les Cahiers de la Vierge*, 'une série de fascicules consacrés à la gloire de la Vierge Marie.' In the first fifty pages M. Maurice Brillant endeavours to help us to form a more exact idea of the village of Jesus and Mary and of the daily life lived there. It is, as he remarks, the office of the great painters to translate, so to say, this theme into song, but there is also need for a prose treatment of the subject (in other words, for a little archaeology and knowledge of the locality) if we are to learn more thoroughly the lesson enforced by the mystery of Nazareth. 'God chose what was weak and mean in the world,' but, in M. Brillant's excellent phrase, 'nous "embourgeoisons" la Rédemption, nous souhaiterions volontiers une Rédemption