

BOOK REVIEWS

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. By Pierre Rousselot, S.J., L. de Grandmaison, S.J., V. Huby, S.J., Alexandre Brou, and M. C. D'Arcy, S.J. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

As a chapter of the celebrated manual of the History of Religions called *Christus*, most of these pages appeared in French over twenty years ago. 'L'œuvre est merveilleuse d'entrain, d'originalité, de pénétration, de sens théologique et mystique,' was the comment of Père M.-J. Lagrange. This chapter, which confines itself to the history of Christianity, was subsequently published separately, and it is this which, with a few additions and omissions, has now been translated into English. It is, however, no commonplace manual of Church history; it is, indeed, a biography rather than a history, a 'life of Christ in the Church which He founded.' The aim has been to present the salient events and characters of Christian history as factors of an organic process. The publishers do well to present the book as a complement to Karl Adam's *The Spirit of Catholicism*. As that work outlined the *theory* of Catholicism, so this 'traces the vital springs of Catholic thought and action' through the ages. In an Introduction of remarkable excellence, which Fr. M. C. D'Arcy has contributed to this translation, is outlined the doctrine which gives unity to the whole, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

The authors set themselves a colossal task, and they recognise that it is 'one that seems beyond human power.' But it was an effort to fill a very urgent need, and though we may feel inclined to dissent from them in some matters of detail, we prefer to admire the attempt rather than find fault with the achievement. And indeed, the effort has been crowned in the main with extraordinary success. A real genius at detecting the true unity which underlies the vast multitude and complex diversity of isolated historical facts, joined with much shrewdness of judgment on matters of detail, contributed to the production of what has justly come to be regarded in France as a classic of modern Catholic literature.

It is inevitable, in such a work of condensation, that difficulties should sometimes be shelved or but lightly hinted at; but it is with admiration rather than irritation that we watch the gay ease with which, for instance, Pères Rousselot and Huby glide over such intricate questions as the Synoptic Problem, the Parousia and the Logos. Their effort to synthesise the moral and eschatological aspects of the Gospel teaching and to trace their several developments through Apostolic and Patristic times is truly illuminating. The section on the medieval period

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is less satisfying, and might with advantage have been committed to the care of a specialist. Yet even here the usual keenness of judgment and originality shows itself, and much important and commonly overlooked matter is emphasised. Of particular interest is the contrast which is shown to exist between Franciscan and Dominican views of asceticism, and the insistence that Franciscans introduced 'a *new* form of obedience,' later developed by the Jesuits, but quite other than that existing traditionally in the monasteries and sanctioned, be it added, by Aquinas. The paragraphs on St. Thomas are perhaps more remarkable for their lyrical enthusiasm than their critical depth; but the regret that the great commentators on St. Thomas and the 'official' Thomists generally, in spite of their abilities, 'did not possess in a higher degree the faculty of adaptive originality' is very just, but hardly takes account of the importance of their essentially conservative function. The treatment of the post-Reformation Church manifests a laudable desire to be fair and to avoid a very natural partizanship. A comparison of page 289 with the original will reveal a remarkable change of opinion in its estimate of Rome's attitude to French ecclesiastical politics. Fr. D'Arcy has added a few pages to bring the story down to our own day.

The translator has done his work well; but there are slips. On p. 153 *querelle* has become *cause*, with the result that we learn that Constantine intervened in the *cause* of Donatism! On p. 168 *haut moyen age* has become *middle ages* without epithet, which is misleading, and the following sentence is as baffling in English as in the original. *Pius X* should read *Pius IX* on p. 303. There is a more serious mistake on p. 195 which makes a rationalist of St. Thomas Aquinas! *Qu'il* has been read as *ce qu'il*, with the result that the Saint's celebrated 'Non crederet ea (quae subsunt fidei) nisi videret ea esse credenda' becomes 'We should not *believe* if we did not *see* THAT WHICH we have to believe'!

We cannot conclude without comment on the extraordinary fashion in which this volume is presented to the public. The back of the wrapper is inscribed in such a way as to lead one to suppose that it contains a new work by Fr. D'Arcy. On the front of the wrapper tiny letters tell us that it is *edited* by Fr. D'Arcy, and the same inscription appears on the cloth cover. The flap on the inside of the wrapper attributes only the introduction and the revision of the last chapter to Fr. D'Arcy. Only on the title page do we learn the distinguished names of the principal and original authors, but even here

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there is no hint that this is a translation. This information is at last vouchsafed to us in a 'publishers' note' on page 9, but which further misleads us by insinuating that this volume is a complete English version of *Christus*.

V.W.

A CHEERFUL ASCETIC AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Rev. James J. Daly, S.J. (The Bruce Publishing Company, New York; \$1.75).

The cheerful ascetic in question is Francis of Cardona, Rector of Salamanca University, who stepped down from his rectorial chair into the Jesuit novitiate and achieved a record—surely unparalleled in the history of learning—by becoming an undergraduate in the university of which he had formerly been head. He began his Jesuit career by being given charge of the refectory, the kitchen and the stable. His efforts in combining these three departments were more successful than another well-known case of an ostler turned monastic cook whose staple dish was sometimes indistinguishable from a bran mash. Fr. Daly presents this attractive figure as a kind of re-incarnation of Brother Juniper.

Another essay on Charles Waterton is a plea to Catholics for a revival of the memory of the great naturalist who in his day was eminent in art, science and literature, and vigorously, almost pugnaciously, Catholic at a time when being a Catholic of any sort was unfashionable.

Three delightful essays on Sir Thomas More, one on Sir John Day, another on Sir Charles Russell, criticism of Emerson and another of Yeats, are among the other joys of this book which we hope may find an English publisher and so be more easily accessible to readers on this side of the Atlantic.

K.

THE SOUL OF THE MALTESE RACE. History which Proves our Latinity. By Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, LL.D. Pp. 61.

A booklet containing the evidence, together with substantiating memoranda, given by the Secretary of the Nationalist Party before the Askwith Commission. The cause ably argued is that the culture of Malta is Italian, and that a recognition of this should not conflict with the island's Imperial position. The publisher's title is symbolc—Sapienza's Library Incorporating John Bull Press, Marsamuscetto, Malta.

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