

## REVIEWS

**THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO OTHER RELIGIONS.** The Hulsean Lectures, delivered before the University of Cambridge in 1949 by E. C. Dewick, D.D. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

The Hulsean Lectures, founded in 1777 under the will of the Revd John Hulse, forbid the lecturer to indulge in polemics save to protect the Church from such calamities as 'the superstition of Popery or the enthusiasm of Methodism'. Papists and Methodists long dead will rejoice with Mr Hulse in the achievement of the Hulsean Lecturer in 1949.

A missionary for many years in India and Ceylon, Dr Dewick knows his Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist. Wisely, he extends his definition of 'religion' for his purposes to systems like Communism and Fascism, having much to say on the subject that is true and useful. The bibliography does not list Professor Binchy's book on the Church and Italian Fascism, which would have helped the author to a more informed appraisal of the Papal attitude. The chapter on 'The Challenge from other Religions' has valuable information on the new attitude to Christianity in the East. Other chapters deal with the Old Testament attitude to other religions, our Lord's teaching in the Gospels, and as interpreted by Catholic and Protestant. Part VI has much of value in its treatment of 'the weaknesses of missions today' and 'some outstanding problems'.

Dr Dewick is at his best in his thoughtful pages on 'motives behind the answers' of Christian denominations to non-Christian challenges, and in 'the recovery of first principles'. He adds some glowing tributes to Catholic missionaries. No Catholic desiring to explain the true sense of 'outside the Church there is no salvation' could improve on the author's quotations from De Lugo (p. 123), Maritain and others.

Apart from differences inherent in Dr Dewick's position as a non-Catholic, our only quarrel with him is—paradoxically—that he has accepted the view, held officially till recently at the Vatican, of Jesuit missionaries in China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 'Till recently', because the Decree of Propaganda of December 8th, 1939, is, after two hundred years, the vindication of their policy, even its 'canonization' as a norm for all modern missions. Catholics attacking Father Ricci in the seventeenth century said far worse things (and with far less excuse than Dr Dewick) about him and his companions. Under the heading 'Adaptation of Christianity to local conditions', the author says very truly that 'some of the most adventurous experiments towards adaptation have been made by missionaries of the Church of

Rome, in spite of its rigidity in fundamentals of doctrine and discipline'. (p. 193.) He speaks of 'the Jesuit missionaries who tried to obtain Papal sanction for the incorporation of the practice of ancestor worship into the Church. But all these were tactical moves, not based on the conviction that the things adopted were of real value, but simply in the hope that they would attract a larger number of converts. There was in them a spirit of compromise and even of dishonesty; in the long run they neither brought nor deserved to bring permanent success.' (p. 193.)

Had Dr Dewick been delivering the Hulsean Lectures soon after their foundation, he would either have inherited the fantastic lies about Popery which were the official 'history' of the time, or been prevented from using any uncontaminated sources of truth to which he might have found access.

Sad to relate, the 'official' story about the Jesuit missions in China is as much based on calumny as was the government propaganda against Popery accepted by Mr Hulse in 1777; the difference is not in the malice of motive or unscrupulousness of method, but in the religion of the calumniators. Not Protestants or non-Christians killed Christian prospects in China but the hatred of certain Catholics for Jesuits. Not till Pastor published his monumental work on the Popes—after Leo XIII had vindicated the claims of truth and insisted on the opening of the Vatican archives to historical research—could the truth be told fully of the weakness of Pope Clement XIV, elect of the Bourbons for the very purpose of suppressing the Jesuits (cf. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, Vol. 38).

It was as part of the mining operations preceding this explosion that a systematic campaign of calumny was organized against the Jesuit missions in India and China. If the earlier story had not been told from documents, as Pastor has done for the suppression, that is largely because the oath imposed on the missionaries acted, in effect, as a ban on self-defence.

Time, however, always on the side of truth and justice, is now taking its revenge. Interest among Protestants as well as Catholics in Father Ricci's experiment in 'missionary accommodation'—briefly, the introduction of the bride of Christ dressed for China as a Chinese bride—is being increasingly recognized as the most intelligent commendation of Christianity in the whole of its history. Its supreme justification is its adoption as official policy today—though, alas, centuries too late. What the Chinese recognized then as sincere respect by profound scholars for their language, culture and religion seems to them now—for they have long memories—a mere measure of expediency to favour an alien religion.

The ban on discussion of the Chinese rites has hitherto prevented or

hindered research by those most interested and concerned. But, even forty years ago, there were a few with knowledge and detachment sufficient to state the conclusion which a documented account will, they believe, establish.

The following is a review in *The Times Literary Supplement* as far back as April 6th, 1911. I have taken it from a work still in manuscript which gives no more than the text. The reviewer is, in the tradition of that periodical, anonymous; it is not of course the purpose or effect of such anonymity to exempt him from justifying his statements:

‘The progress of the Church of Rome has more than once been impeded by selfish partisans within her gates. . . . China might have been hers if she had only given heed to the Emperor Kang Tsi. [This on the question of *fact* as to Chinese intentions in “ancestor-worship”.] With unprecedented condescension to “foreign devils”, the Son of Heaven deigned personally to assure Roman Catholics that certain social customs were purely civil and had no connection whatever with idolatry and superstition. But Rome would listen to no one except those who grudged the Peking missionaries the position they had acquired at the Chinese court, and she thus brought upon herself the wrath of the Monarch and the consequent persecution of the Christians.

‘India might have been hers if she had allowed De Nobili to continue the conversion of the Brahmins; yet here again she had no ear save for the calumnies of an envious rival, in consequence of which she issued a set of rules, some of them suicidal, formed in ignorance of local conditions.’

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THE REIGN OF QUANTITY AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES. By René Guénon (Luzac; 25s.)

THE TRANSCENDENT UNITY OF RELIGIONS. By Frithjof Schuon (Faber; 21s.)

René Guénon, who died in 1951, left behind him a body of writing, which Père Daniélou, in his *Essai sur le Mystère de l'Histoire*, has characterized as one of the most singular of our time. He made himself the exponent of what he called the ‘metaphysical tradition’, which he held was the unifying principle of all the great religions of east and west, and from this point of view he proceeded to make a devastating attack on all modern thought and modern civilization as a prolonged process of ‘deviation’ from the truth. Though the tone and method of his attack was extremely uncompromising, there is much in it with which a Catholic can agree. He himself regarded medieval Catholicism as one of the principal expressions in the west of the metaphysical tradition,