

seminal insights of Pope Stephen, Optatus, Augustine and the Western tradition, that baptism first and then other sacraments, given outside visible communion, could be valid. After all the

end product of any evolutionary process, whether biological or intellectual, when its origins are considered, can *seem* revolutionary.

*Henry St John, O.P.*

THE THEOLOGY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY by Jean Daniélou, S.J. *Darton Longman and Todd, 45s.*

This is the first volume in a series of three, treating the history of Christian doctrine up to Nicaea. The French edition appeared in 1958, but the present book is more than a translation: it has been adapted, with the help of the author, to make it easier reading and to take account of developments that have occurred in the meantime. What is difficult to discover is what kind of readers author or translator could have had in mind; certainly this first volume will mean little to any but a handful of specialists who can safely be presumed to have read it already.

The theme of the book is that in the immediate post-apostolic age a specifically Jewish form of Christian theology existed, which slowly gave way to the familiar Hellenistic forms from which most later development started. This Jewish Christianity has almost entirely disappeared from view, but can be reconstructed from apocalyptic works, orthodox and heretical, the apocrypha of the New Testament, from references in the early Fathers, and so on.

Père Daniélou sets out the sources, and discusses their chronology, in the early chapters of his book. He then gives a systematic account of the doctrinal content of this thought arranging it under such heads as the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Church, Sacraments, Eschatology. The general character of the teaching is best summarized in his own words:

‘Its imagery is that of the dominant Jewish thought-form of the time, namely apocalyptic. It is conceived in terms of the revelation of cosmic secrets: of the dwelling places of angels and demons and the souls of men; of the

secrets of history written beforehand in the book of God; of the mystery of the Cross of glory, and of the pre-existent Church, at once old and yet young and beautiful. The heart of its faith is the affirmation that Christ alone has penetrated beyond the veil, and opened the seals of the heavenly scroll, achieving Paradise for those who bear the Name of the Son of God.’

This is indeed a strange world of ideas, and one which seems to hold Père Daniélou fascinated in its grip. But just how much is it really worth?

The general impression one is left with is of a radical inferiority in quality of thought, by comparison both with the canonical scriptures and the hellenistic tradition that replaced it. Though Paul and the evangelists occasionally speak an idiom that is obscure, on the whole their message comes through to men’s hearts in any age. The same is true of at least the greater of the Fathers, an Ignatius or an Origen. But the speculations which fill this book – attempts to track out the cosmology of heaven and hell, or provide us with a life and times of the Cross – have the fantasy character of a nursery world, more interesting to psychologists than to men trying to live the gospel. Perhaps their rediscovery has a use if it helps in the understanding of certain passages in writers who do matter: but it is not easy to see the propriety of occupying no less than one third of a general history of the pre-Nicean theology by this extraordinary stuff whose passage into oblivion we can only regard as providential.

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