

REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. By Philip Hughes. Volume Two. (Sheed & Ward; 15/-.)

It is a marvellous story, told clearly by Father Hughes in this "introductory study," the history of the Catholic Church from "Augustine to Aquinas." A thousand years of struggle—"an old world ending, a new world in process of formation upon its ruins"; hence the sub-title—*The Church and the World the Church created*. Not that, as the author assures us, the book is written to prove any such thesis as that Mediæval Civilization had the Catholic Church for its sole creator: "It is not indeed written to prove any thesis at all." But on examination facts emerge and conclusions are reached. The story itself reveals miraculous adventure of a divinely established papacy, now rising to the highest as guide and ruler of the faithful people of God, now sinking to the lowest—less than the least; reveals also the Church many times "doomed to death, though fated not to die."

Relations of Church and State present recurring difficulties. In France, at the baptism of Clovis and the great council that followed was "laid the foundation of that dependence on the State which was to characterize ever afterwards the Catholicism of the French." And in that same sixth century in Spain is the Church "in many respects a department of the state." Over and over again in the course of that thousand years and after it heresy and anti-clerical revolt are directed against the wealth and worldliness of the hierarchy. The fatal opulence of bishops is directly provocative of rebellion against Catholic Faith; it is a challenge that results in repudiation of all Christian belief.

As for the papacy—it presents every variety of human endeavour. The trouble arises early with the recognition of the importance of the see of Rome. Faction fights between the supporters of rival candidates for the papal throne occur in the fourth and fifth centuries. Near the close of the sixth century St. Gregory the Great is elected to be discerned by the author as "more than any other the founder of mediæval Europe." By the ninth century "no one is to be consecrated pope without the sanction of the emperor or his representative"; and this is strikingly reversed three centuries later when Pope Innocent III, calling himself "God's vicar" when his predecessors were content to style themselves "vicar of Peter," declares that "the king is the servant appointed to carry out the instructions of the priest."

Below the utter degradation of the ninth and tenth centuries the papacy never sank. What with the turbulent Romans, the

BLACKFRIARS

family feuds of the nobles, and the murderous habits of their dependents—John VIII is the “first pope whom history records to have been murdered” and he had not a few successors in the next eighty years—and the general anarchy it was possible for “a precocious little blackguard,” Theophlact, aged twelve, to be made pope and reign for twelve years as Benedict IX.¹ It was an evil time for Church discipline that tenth century, with married bishops leaving their bishoprics to their sons, and yet like every other century a glorious time for saints and missionaries in heathen Europe. “The universal ‘dark ages’ never existed except in the minds of those who had no means of reading their history.” Emperors were to harass the pope and enslave the bishops, but one at least achieved sanctity, St. Henry II. The Roman populace was always to trouble the pope, hence that somewhat austere Englishman, Hadrian IV, was constrained to lay the very city of Rome under an interdict. If Innocent III is the last of the great mediæval popes (it was left to his successors to end the imperial tyranny of the Hohenstauffen) the fourth council of the Lateran, 1215, is the great event of his reign and its canons are illuminative with their clerical regulations—“better few good priests than many bad ones,” a sentiment which St. Thomas More would express in his day—and the reminder that all confessors have an obligation not to reveal what is confessed to them. By the canons of that council are the laity required to make an annual confession of sins and at Easter to receive Holy Communion.

Struggles with the State, struggles political with the emperor struggles with heresy, with Albigenses above all, and the setting up of the inquisition (Pope Nicholas I might forbid all torture of prisoners, Pope Innocent IV is found formally prescribing the rack in 1252), struggles within the Church with bold bad men and wickedness in high places—what a record it is! (But after all as Maitland reminded us “sin in some shape or other is the great staple of history”).

Father Hughes in the modesty of his introduction disarms criticism of what is left out. The notable point is that so much has been included. For the survey is as wide as the standpoint is admirable: “History is the last scientific discipline to harbour the dogmatist easily.” With the triumph of the Catholic intelligence, represented by St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, this scholarly and most eminently readable

¹ But not all historical students are in agreement with this well-established account. Dr. R. L. Poole in *Benedict IX and Gregory VI* for instance (British Academy Proceedings, Vol. VIII) throws doubt on the alleged youthfulness. But see *Downside Review* article by Dom Adrian Morley, July, 1935: *Benedict IX and the Council of Sutri*.

REVIEWS

history ends. The bibliography shows French authorities as the chief sources—are our English history schools so painfully defective? Maps and time charts increase the value and add to the usefulness of a work that no student can afford to ignore and no pious or intelligent (but why “or”?) Catholic neglect.

JOSEPH CLAYTON.

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY. By R. Worts. (Heineman; 7/6.)

We have all been amused by *1066 and All That*, but perhaps have scarcely realized that the state of things occasioning the satire is not so funny. For many years the importation of adult, University methods of teaching crystallised in the Certificate Examinations has petrified a living subject and made it poison for the young. “Unless the present system is challenged and considerably challenged it will increase its grip on the schools and secure an unbreakable hold on both teachers and pupils.” The Headmaster of the City of Leeds School presents this challenge by a thorough discussion of the whole problem based on more than 20 years experience and on an acute study of the difficult psychological issues (e.g., time sense) involved in the teaching of history to young minds. Catholic teachers should be especially interested because they are (or often can be) free from enslavement of academic tyranny. They need not fear that this is a thesis written with the brutal unawareness of the mere reformer; it is sympathetically alive to all the difficulties of the liberal-minded schoolmaster.

“My considered judgment is that the Certificate Examinations as at present conducted denude History of any educative value . . . except that of memory training and clear restatement of memorized knowledge.” And writing of the condition of boys at this stage, boys who “begin to talk (after severe training) in parrot fashion and write unintelligently of ‘policies’ and ‘movements,’” Mr. Worts adds truly that “the average school student of this age is perhaps the most artificial mind ever known to a cultured society.” This is “the dreary fate of adolescence.” History might be the most illuminating and liberalizing of all school discipline; it might be the most fertile ground for the *constructive* imagination; but only if it is taught *primarily as an art* and not simply as a science. The material of history must be made *real*, and if the imagination cannot do this that material fails to exist. History must be a *story*. A little reflection will show the futility of applying the “scientific” method to juvenile minds and the absurdity of trying to make young boys understand the “causes and effects” of great historical periods—a method, incidentally, which is “the chief weapon in the armoury of teachers whose first duty is not to engender love of their subject but to get