

REVIEWS

THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING. By Vincent Taylor. (Macmillan; 21s.)

This book forms Part III of the Speakers' Lectures on 'The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching' delivered at Oxford over the years 1951-1956. Part I appeared in 1953 and Part II in 1954: *not* in 1952 and 1953, as the dust-jacket suggests.

Professor Taylor combines two methods or approaches to his subject; thus Part I is exegetical and therein he surveys, with an acuity which commands respect, all the *apport* of the New Testament books, taken in isolation or in groups, or of specially significant passages: thus we pass from 'The Epistles of St Paul' to 'The Christological hymn of Phil. ii, 6-11', and to 'The First Epistle of St Peter'. Part II is described as historical and theological, and we are given a survey of 'The Divine Consciousness of Jesus'—a title which rather blinds us to Professor Taylor's preoccupation and problem, namely proofs of the divinity of our Lord. He then expands in 'The Emergence of the Divine Consciousness of Jesus', 'The Christology of the Primitive Christian Community'. This last is perhaps the most valuable section, and the most rewarding for a Catholic reader. 'The Limitations of Primitive Christology' does seem to stress the obvious, for 'primitive theology' is not likely to have the development of later theology; then we are given 'The Contributions of the Great New Testament Writers'. There follow more speculative sections on Christology and the Trinity, and Kenosis and Psychology. Modestly Professor Taylor ends with 'Towards a Modern Christology' and an Epilogue, of which more anon.

The author hopes of his book that 'it may meet difficulties and stimulate reflexion on the greatest of all subjects, the meaning and significance of Christ' (p. viii). There is no doubt about the stimulus to reflexion, and there is an immense amount of valuable reading and analysis of text after text; and here Professor Taylor excels. Even more striking is the loving reverence with which the Scripture is cited and used. This, alas, is too often lacking in present-day writers on theology, or commentators. Too often are we treated to a caustic secularity of approach, utterly alien to and uncomprehending of the Word of God. But Professor Taylor is ever reverent, even when he lapses into untenable suppositions, as when he tells us that 'we no longer accept' the historical character of the Genesis story (p. 48); or that Acts are a late composition (p. 24): a younger school would not agree (cf. C. V.

Rieu, Acts, pp. 21-22); and 'Q' lives on in Professor Taylor, though dispatched and dead in the eyes of some contemporaries.

There are valuable sections, quarries for theologians and preachers, as, e.g., St Paul's titles for our Lord (pp. 34-35). There are *dicta* which we can always return to, as 'those who absorb Pauline teaching about Christ start out on a journey which begins and ends with God' (p. 29); or again 'in the Person of Christ is the key to all Christian doctrine' (p. 223), and we remember St Thomas's declaration that 'person' is the supreme reality in all nature's world.

The frequent allusions to British scholarship are perhaps a foible; and our ears are not quite attuned to 'the flowering period of British kenotic theology' (p. 262).

The Epilogue is an appeal for faith, for 'the problem of the Person of Christ is not solved by any process of reasoned argument' (p. 305). Our author has seen this, and also grasped that 'the Old Testament was the Bible of Primitive Christianity; it was read with avidity and new eyes' (p. 198-9). What he, and all our separated brethren have yet to come to, is that all Scripture is to be read with avidity and the new eyes of Catholic faith.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

THE CANONS OF THE COUNCIL OF SARDICA. By Hamilton Hess. (Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press; 25s.)

This scholarly work was originally written and submitted as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and has since been re-written and expanded. The subject is undoubtedly important for the historian and the student of Canon Law sources.

The Canons of the Council of Sardica (Sofia), probably convened in A.D. 343, are now generally accepted as genuine. It is likely that the canons were not originally numbered, but formed a continuous record of the synodal acts. They are concerned to correct the abuses relating to the episcopal office, which had been practised by the schismatical bishops. The number of canons, as we now know them, are in the Latin text twenty-one, and in the Greek twenty. There are variations in the order of numbering in the different recensions. That 'these series of canons are simply stenographic records of the legislative sessions, either in abridgement or as the only minutes which were taken at the sittings in question', is a plausible conclusion convincingly supported by argument (pp. 28, 29). Hosius of Cordova was president of the synod, and the parliamentary process which is reflected in the canons is worthy of special attention.

The book is divided into two parts, followed by three appendices,