

PUBLICATIONS

The Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians, with Introduction and Commentary, by Rev. Joseph MacRory, D.D., Vice-President and Professor of Sacred Scripture, Maynooth College. Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son. 1915. Pp. xxxviii and 435. Price, 7s 6d net.

This new commentary on the interesting letters of the great Apostle to the people of Corinth will be warmly welcomed by all English-speaking priests, and is likely long to remain a classic amongst them. 'Listening assiduously to the reading of Blessed Paul's Epistles,' wrote St. John Chrysostom some fourteen centuries ago, 'I exult with joy: I am delighted with that spiritual trumpet: I am warmed with affection, listening to the voice of a friend, whose person I almost think I see and hear his words.' In this case the powerful pen of the greatest genius the Church has ever welcomed to her bosom is dealing with matters of paramount importance. 'It would be difficult,' Dr. MacRory says in the introduction, 'to exaggerate the importance especially of the First Epistle. Its teaching on the indissolubility of the bond of Christian marriage, its glorious eulogy of charity, its unique testimony to the wealth of spiritual gifts with which the Holy Ghost enriched the infant Church, the light it throws on a great Christian community at so early a period as the middle of the first century, the confirmation it supplies of the Gospel accounts of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, the evidence it affords that the Blessed Eucharist was regularly celebrated before the year 60 A.D., the proofs it furnishes of the great fundamental doctrine of our Lord's Resurrection, the arguments by which it establishes the final and glorious resurrection of the just—all this enables us to realise how much poorer we should have been if the First Epistle to the Corinthians had never been written. And as for the Second Epistle, if it contained nothing of importance besides St. Paul's enumeration of his trials and sufferings endured for the Gospel, it would still be one of the most precious and inspiring portions of the New Testament.'

Dr. MacRory's treatment of the letters is not unworthy of their elevated character. It is not too elaborate nor yet too skimpy; and whilst avoiding the discussion of secondary details it is full, and often eloquent, when the author has to deal with mysteries or consoling truths like the Eucharist and the Resurrection. Each letter is preceded by a careful study of its date, circumstances of writing, and authenticity, whilst each chapter is made easy by a very clear outline of its subject-matter at the beginning. The author does not overburden his work with criticisms of the text, but when necessary gives his own opinions on disputed words and passages, backing them up with solid arguments. The explanation of the words and the elucidation of the Apostle's thought naturally form the main part of this valuable commentary, and it is here that the student and the preacher will find rich stores of matter, set forth in clear and elegant language. The analysis of the famous eleventh chapter of the First Epistle is as fine a piece of criticism and reasoning on the Blessed Eucharist as we have met with.

Dr. MacRory promises us commentaries written on the same lines on the other Letters of St. Paul. Those who use the present work will be sure to look forward to them, especially if the author drops the present English version and gives us one of his own from the original Greek.

[GHIMEL.]

History of the Catholic Church from the Renaissance to the French Revolution, by the Rev. James MacCaffrey, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Maynooth. Two volumes. M. H. Gill and Son, Dublin. 1915. Price, 12s per volume.

Some thirty years ago Pope Leo XIII., on throwing open the archives of the Vatican Library to the historians of the world, thought it well to quote for their benefit these words from Cicero: 'Above all things

let writers bear in mind that the first law of history is never to dare to say that which is not true, and the second never to fear to say that which is true; lest the suspicion of hate or favor fall upon their statements.'

Dr. MacCaffrey has taken this advice well to heart, for his work is written solely from the standpoint of one who is anxious to get at the truth and to present it to the reader. Not that he has no views of his own—mathematical history is an impossibility—but he is always careful to set the evidence before us and to base his own judgments on the facts. The result is that we get a survey of this period of three centuries which is at once authentic and interesting. Take, for example, his study of Luther. The friends of this central figure of the Reformation movement assure us that he was, if not a saint, at least good enough to head the religious reform, while his opponents, Protestant as well as Catholic, have no hesitation in denouncing him as the embodiment of every vice. The truth is that Luther's character is an enigma, and our author gives us an impartial and accurate delineation of it as seen from within and without. Statements testifying to Luther's nobility of heart and disinterested motives, as well as those that touch on his morality, his want of moderation in the use of drink, and his utter disregard of truth, are all weighed in the balance, scrutinised with care, and when necessary, rejected as untenable. When we have finished reading the account we feel that we now understand the man, and that we have got as reliable an account of him as we are ever likely to obtain.

The learned Maynooth professor undertakes to lead us through the tangled maze of European religious history between the Middle Ages and the French Revolution of 1789. The close of the Middle Ages saw the world becoming secular in its tendencies, the layman ruling over the clergy, and Roman Law tightening its grip on the Roman Pontiff in matters temporal. The Pope as King of kings was now a thing of the past, but not before the institution of which he was the head had fulfilled the noble task entrusted to it. How could Europe ever have emerged in a civilised state out of the crash that followed on the break-up of the Roman Empire if there had not been a supreme power like the Papacy, and if that power had not been true to its trust as guardian not only of faith and piety, but also of learning, law, and civilisation? 'That it always rose to the height of that great enterprise,' writes a modern historian, 'will not be maintained by the historian; but its benefits outnumbered by far its abuses; and the glory is not dim which hangs round its memory, when we call to mind that it consecrated the beginnings of a peaceful, Christian Europe, and watched beside the springs of art, science, industry, order, and freedom.'

Our author opens his study with an excellent, impartial, and picturesque analysis of the causes of the Reformation. The decay of Scholasticism, the revival of Classical Studies in Europe, the general effects of Humanism on men's minds in this age of unrest and great intellectual activity; the political, social, and religious condition of Europe—all these points are subjected to an examination that is searching, accurate in outline and detail.

Chapters ii. and iii. (pp. 54-177) are perhaps the most absorbing part of these volumes, for they deal with the outcome of the issues that were handed down as a legacy from the Middle Ages and with the result of the forces of discontent that we call the causes of the Reformation. The crisis brought out the man. 'Though in his personal conduct Luther fell far short of what people might reasonably look for in a self-constituted reformer, yet in many respects he had exceptional qualifications for the part he was called up to play. Endowed with great physical strength, gifted with a marvellous memory and a complete mastery of the German language, as inspiring in the pulpit or on the platform as he was with his pen, regardless of nice limitations or even of truth, when he wished to strike down an opponent or to arouse the enthusiasm of a mob, equally at home with princes in the drawing-room as with peasants in a tavern—Luther was an ideal demagogue to head a semi-religious, semi-social revolt' (Introduction viii-ix).

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