

## REVIEWS

ANGLICANISM. Compiled and edited by Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross. (S.P.C.K.; 21/-.)

This finely produced book contains a copious selection from the Anglican writers of the seventeenth century illustrating "the thought and practice" of the Church of England of that time. As a corpus of literature it is a splendid record of a period when the doctrines of religion were expressed in great prose. Only a scholar acquainted with the entire bulk of this literature could decide whether the editors have achieved a truly representative volume; but from the consistency between the many writers quoted, it is evident that they have at least succeeded in isolating one of the principal and most impressive tendencies of their Church in that century. Each point is illustrated by ample quotations from several authors; only in the section on usury has less than justice been done to the noble effort made by the Anglican divines, with the support of the Stuart kings, to maintain the mediæval tradition of control over money-lenders.

The Catholic theologian will observe two things about this book: the amount of Catholic teaching it contains and at the same time the uncertainty about or denial of much that the Catholic Church regards as essential. It is a matter for thankfulness that out of the wreckage of the Reformation—a catastrophe for which Catholics will remember their own share of the responsibility—an institution should have preserved, under the Providence of God, such basic Christian doctrines as those of the Trinity and the Incarnation for the belief of its members. For this reason, among others, the Anglican Church merits special attention and sympathy from Catholic thinkers. At the same time a Catholic is bound to make a radical criticism of the entire Anglican position as here illustrated. The ground for this criticism lies in the fact that these writers propose no real *doctrine of the Church* at all. To Catholics the Church is an article of faith, a mystery to be believed in, and, in its teaching aspect, the *living* voice of God. Mr. More in his introduction writes of "that *accumulation of wisdom* which is the *voice* of the Church" and his phrase brings out admirably the vital contrast between the two positions. It is difficult to see how any amount of accumulated wisdom could ever constitute a voice. Normally, at any rate, a voice is the instrument of a *living* person.

The intellectual origin of this defect is to be found in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. There the Church is identified with the nation, and *all* positive law, civil and ecclesiastical, is said to arise from the single law-making power inherent in any society.

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It is, in fact, a rationalization of the Elizabethan settlement, presupposing a unitary state with no duality of authority, no independent Church with independent teaching and legislative power.<sup>1</sup> This deadly legacy is responsible for the lack of coherence in the treatment of the nature of the Church by later writers. It is responsible for Mr. More's assertion that "what we have to look for in the ecclesiastical literature of England is not so much finality as direction." Hooker, however, would have quailed before a direction without finality, and even his generous spirit would not have tolerated the idea that we don't know where we're going, but we are on our way.

A further point of interest is the lack of any theory of doctrinal development. This is explained in part by the absence of the idea of a teaching Church actively interpreting the deposit of faith. But it is not only due to that. Nor can it be entirely accounted for by the illogicality which admits the immense "developments" of Christological definitions in the early Church and refuses those of later ages. The problem involved is really that of the relation between faith and reason; the fear that reason will rationalize faith. Light is thrown on the difficulty if we consider the sources upon which the Anglican thinkers had to work. In the first place they had the great Patristic inheritance; and when a fine and holy mind such as that of Andrewes expresses the result of his contemplation of the Fathers it is magnificent. Secondly, they had the debased scholasticism of the later Middle Ages and the new rationalism of the Cartesian school. (One could wish that even the great apologist Bellarmin had been a finer philosopher.) The consequence was that reason as used in the new metaphysics, having lost its spiritual structure of analogy, really became a materializing enemy of faith. When Andrewes discusses faith and reason and uses St. Thomas' arguments for the need of revelation even for certain truths that can be naturally known, he heads the section with the significant title "*We cannot come to God by reason.*" Thus faith is *divorced* from reason, and the Thomist synthesis which enabled both the truths of faith to retain their mystery and reason its prerogative is destroyed. The issue of this disaster was to cripple theology and to abandon the intellect in religion for the benefit of "experience." Mr. More asserts that the Anglican "justifies his belief by the pragmatic test of experience, namely: does it work?" Incidentally it would be interesting to know what these great divines, now we trust in the heavenly regions, are thinking about Mr. More's introduction to themselves! And if only the excellent portrait of Bishop Andrewes in the Bodleian had been used as a frontispiece that introduction would surely have faded out.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Outram Evennett, Richard Hooker, *Downside Review*, October, 1932.