

## REVIEWS

### PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

GOD IN PATRISTIC THOUGHT. By G. L. Prestige, D.D. (Heinemann; 12/6.)

For some years Dr. Prestige has been at work on the *Lexicon of Patristic Greek*, portions of which have from time to time appeared in the *Journal of Theological Studies*. This has compelled him to make a minute study of the principal words used by the Greek Fathers when treating of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, with the result that he has given us in the present volume a most valuable study of those doctrines as the Greeks saw them. For though he has from time to time illustrated their teaching from the writings of the Latin Fathers, it is in the main the Greeks of whom he treats, and he rightly ranks Tertullian among the Greeks though his Greek writings have for the most part perished.

The headings of some of his Chapters will show the lines on which he has worked: Theism, Transcendence, Providence, The Trinity, Monotheism, The Word, Subordinationism, Individuality and Objectivity, Hypostasis, Homousion, Unity in Trinity, Formalism and Co-inherence. Two facts emerge from this study: (a) that sound ideas on the Incarnation and the Trinity appear from the very outset, (b) that they are singularly rational. Thus on the Incarnation: "From the earliest moment of theological reflection it was assumed that Jesus Christ was true God as well as true man . . . the Adoptionists . . . and their forerunners stand clearly outside the main stream of Christian experience" (p. 76); "Unless Christ and the Holy Spirit can be preached as truly divine, religion and morality seem to have no absolute value" (p. xv); "The overwhelming sense of divine redemption in Christ led Christians to ascribe absolute deity to their Redeemer. . . . Logos theories were an attempt to explain an already accepted belief in the deity of the Son, not the cause of such a belief gaining acceptance. This means that the doctrine of the Trinity sprang from the inherent necessity to account for the religious data of Christianity, not from the importance of pagan metaphysical presuppositions" (p. xxi). These passages, taken from the author's Introduction, show the conclusions to which his studies have driven him, and they are supported in the body of the volume.

The dependence of the Fathers on Holy Scripture as the one and only quarry whence they drew their doctrines is of course insisted on by Dr. Prestige, and in part he is right when he says for instance that "Irenaeus derived his doctrine from the New

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Testament and on purely Scriptural lines built up an objective conception of the Holy Spirit . . . before him, however, such objectivity as was attained was mainly reached in connection with the phenomena of Scriptural inspiration . . . the first suggestion was derived from the Bible" (p. 84). But here we must take issue with him. How far his researches have led him to study the *Acta* of Chalcedon and Ephesus we do not know, but we feel sure that if he had read carefully St. Cyril's defence of the orthodox teaching on the Incarnation he would have realized that Cyril never insisted on the orthodox teaching *because* it was in Holy Scripture, but simply because it was "that which has been handed down to us"; he finds confirmation of this, of course, in the Bible; indeed he takes each book of the New Testament in turn to show that Christ was true man, and then goes through them all again to show that the same Scriptures also taught that He was true God.

Returning to Dr. Prestige's study of the technical terms used by the Greeks, we may note particularly the discussion on the use of the word "Spirit" (pp. 18 ff.—on p. 18 the word "in" is omitted); also on the distinction between "agenetos" and "agenetos" with one "n" omitted (pp. 42-54); but peculiarly valuable is the long account of the term "economy" and "economy" apropos of Divine Providence (pp. 58 ff.—see, too, especially pp. 65, 67, 98, 100, 111). It is no exaggeration to say that these careful investigations mark a new stage in positive theology and no student will be able to disregard them in the future.

It is refreshing, too, to find Tertullian restored to his true place; "the movement for minimizing the 'juristic' character ascribed to his thought, and emphasizing its philosophical quality, needs to be still further strengthened" (p. xxv, cf. pp. 97 ff. and 111). Even Eusebius is shown to have been frequently misunderstood in some of the less orthodox-sounding expressions he uses, while Dr. Prestige is not afraid to say that "Whatever difficulties Origen experienced in explaining the fact that Christ was truly God, he had no hesitation in proclaiming the fact itself" (p. 79).

We are tempted to quote still more from this fascinating volume—but we must leave readers to discover for themselves what a treasure-house it is.

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CHRISTIANISME ET PHILOSOPHIE. By Etienne Gilson. (Vrin; 15 frs.)

The problem of the place of philosophy in the Christian scheme of things is part of the wider problem of Christianity and humanism. If temporal values are to be despised, there can be