

Protestant principle and the Catholic system. We are divided by a different conception of the relationship between the redemptive event and ourselves: 'The antithesis between Catholicism and Protestantism rests on a different understanding of the making present here and now of the historical once-for-all-ness of revelation'. The principle of justification by faith *alone* is the principle of consent to unsecuredness, of recognition that the redemptive event becomes present only in the preaching which evokes faith, and not in the manifold attempt to *secure* it by turning it into a peculiar kind of *thing* which can be met with in monastic life, liturgy, transubstantiation, apostolic succession, etc. In fact it is the classical Protestant reproach that Catholicism excludes the decision of faith. What Dr Ebeling insists on, however, is that Catholicism must be regarded as a perfectly coherent, often rather magnificent and certainly highly 'successful' religion which nevertheless systematically misunderstands the gospel because of the ontological categories in which it grasps it: in particular because of the absence of any true appreciation of the nature of *history* in the framework of the understanding of reality which Catholicism presupposes. It is therefore on an understanding of reality in which the idea of history has a place that everything turns. Catholicism would not have a true enough conception of *event* to realise that the event of salvation can become present only in the event of preaching. Indeed Dr Ebeling says that Catholicism can continue only by refusing to let itself be affected by the understanding modern man has of himself. It is an opinion which has certainly been held by many Catholics: it may one day be recognised as the significance of the present Council (if it is not already obvious) that it has challenged this opinion. Whether that challenge will ever be responded to, at least by theologians, one cannot yet say: there is little sign of the kind of thinking it would require outside the work of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. But Catholic theology seems to move along about thirty years behind Protestant theology: if the successors of Brunner and Barth are to get to grips with the renovation of ontology what may we not expect from the coming generation of Catholic theologians?

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SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO: LIFE AND CONTROVERSIES, by Gerald Bonner; Library of history and doctrine, S.C.M., 50s.

Adolf Harnack, who devoted some of the finest chapters of his great *Dogmengeschichte* to Saint Augustine, expressed the dilemma of which anyone immersed in the study of Augustine must be sharply conscious: 'Whoever wishes to portray the "whole Augustine" (or "the whole Luther"), stands in danger of betraying the "true Augustine" (or the "true Luther"); for what man's individuality and power are fully expressed in the wide range of all he has said and done?' Harnack wrote at the end of the nineteenth century; his death, in 1930, coincided with the year in which the fifteenth centenary of Augustine's death brought forth

a spate of studies devoted to the saint's life and writings. The intervening period has seen a steady flow of detailed and often scholarly studies on Augustine; the bulky volumes which contain the papers read at the anniversary celebrations in 1954 are no more than a landmark and a representative cross-section. And yet it may safely be said that of those equipped for the task, only one, M. Marrou, has ventured on anything like a portrayal of Augustine in the round, in his short but magisterial volume, *Saint Augustin et l'augustinisme* [E. tr. *Saint Augustine and his influence through the ages*]. Scholars have been only too conscious of Harnack's dilemma, and have preferred to keep to the 'true Augustine' rather than to seek him 'whole'. Now Mr Bonner has had the courage and determination to undertake this daunting enterprise, and to carry it out on a very much larger scale than that of M. Marrou's short book. The present volume contains two long biographical chapters, followed by two chapters devoted to each of the three chief controversies in which Augustine found himself involved: the controversies with the Manichees, the Donatists and the Pelagians. This, the author hopes, is to be followed by a further volume in which Augustine's thought is to be presented systematically.

Mr Bonner is thoroughly at home among Augustine's voluminous works, and he has a good knowledge of other contemporary sources; he is also widely read in the huge bulk of modern literature about Augustine. His account is scholarly and judicious. The more extreme views propounded by one or other writer are generally carefully eschewed, and yet always treated with respect. His picture of Augustine is a traditional, middle-of-the-road picture; and even behind the strictures he sometimes allows himself to make, the reader is conscious of an admiration which seeks to justify as much of its object as possible. His book is a fair-minded and very readable account; perhaps the best of its kind.

Compared with Harnack's exciting chapters, Mr Bonner's book nevertheless lacks something. Harnack had seen the central core of Augustine's significance in the development of Christian doctrine in the inwardness of Augustine's spirituality, his sense of God in the inner recesses of the soul. In his search for this core, Harnack allowed his passionate concern to distort seriously his image of Augustine. His conclusion, that Augustine had divested the Christian religion of dogma, far from doing justice to the 'whole Augustine', will not stand critical examination. It was a nineteenth-century vision of Augustine, and its highlights left far too much in the dark. In Mr Bonner's vision the highlights are subdued, the shadows less dark. Without question, modern historical scholarship has brought us closer here to the 'whole Augustine'. Harnack's Augustine belonged wholly to the nineteenth century; Mr Bonner's stands, unquestionably, in the fourth and fifth centuries. This is clear gain, and in a work of responsible scholarship, such as this is, it would be foolish to complain about the consequent blurring of the image. Nevertheless, a dimension is missing in Mr Bonner's pages. His Augustine, even in his inconsistencies and shortcomings, is too monumental a figure. Only rarely is it given to a historian, even to one of matured insight and at the height of his power, to achieve the kind of understanding which can enter

completely into the deeper tensions of a complex personality. Saint Anselm has recently had his Southern; Saint Augustine still awaits his. Meanwhile we have much for which to be grateful to Mr Bonner.

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS, by Joachim Jeremias; SCM Press, New Testament Library, 30s.

'Back to the historical Jesus!' This liberal Protestant cry of about the turn of the century is, fortunately, little heard today. It is now generally recognised that our approach to the Jesus of history can only be made through the living tradition of faith and prayer, and even the theological interpretations, of the early Church. But even today there are still some gospel commentators who, after conceding this principle, go on to give the impression that the interval between the ascension and the final writing of the four gospels was a period in which the first generation or two of Christians simply lost touch with the historical source of their faith. Only early source-documents are to be treated seriously; all else is 'embroidery' by the primitive Christian community. Books by commentators of this type may read rather like mathematical treatises, concerned primarily with the manipulations of 'material' long dead. A common, over-simplified and usually devotional reaction to this treatment has been a too-rigid stand on the letter of Holy Writ and a refusal to countenance any scientific analysis aimed at showing how the sacred text evolved and took its shape. The text is inspired, and that is enough. Why subject what is sacred to the profane processes of human scientific investigation? Subscribers to this latter error (as also scholars who have not quite grasped the importance for biblical theology of the process of salvation-history by which God reveals himself in time) are still basing conclusions about the meaning of scripture on an uncritical comparison of texts taken from divergent sources, presumably in the conviction that since the same Holy Spirit is the author of the whole Bible it does not matter. In other words, bad exegesis and biblical theology is still being produced, due to neglect of the fact that the Spirit works from within the true human freedom of many individual persons placed in widely varying circumstances. Of all scripture, it is the gospels which seem to be worst afflicted at the hands of those who tend towards either of these two extremes. There are not a great many studies available in English that are successful in avoiding them both, while yet making a substantial and positive contribution to our true understanding of the gospel message. Of those that there are, the book under review is certainly in the first rank of importance.

The reason for this is partly, of course, that Jeremias brings to bear on the parables all the brilliance of his scholarly insight, and that he builds with discerning selectivity upon the work of others before him. (He frequently quotes C. H. Dodd, for example, though he takes account of the one-sided nature of Dodd's conception of the kingdom; cf. pp. 7, 21, 230.) But equally significant for the