

## REVIEWS

EARLY CHRISTIAN CREEDS. By J. N. D. Kelly. (Longmans; 26s.)

This important work is the fruit of many years' study. It is built in a remarkable way around subjects that are fundamental: the early creeds and baptism, creeds as doctrinal codifications, the problem of the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Apostles' Creed. The reader will notice that this plan puts the question in the context of the general development of Church History; hence the advantage of a broad background so often missing from the erudite verbal and technical analyses of works on the creeds. There is a wealth of material, treated with uncommon scrupulousness and in a masterly fashion. The texts cited are, as far as possible, taken from the best editions. The work would have been enhanced if it had presented a homogeneous and classified edition of the texts of the creeds. Hahn is no longer good enough. Such as it is, this book will save the student much time in preliminary investigations, and will provide a solid basis for specialised studies. What distinguishes it from most analogous works is a characteristic which comes near to marring its success, and yet is to the author's credit. Instead of brilliant systematisations, sensational theories or startling 'discoveries', he has preferred a completely restrained and objective method. So we find him extremely reserved in his conclusions, ever ready to admit the ignorance that exists about how matters really stand, recognising those territories which have not yet been explored and perhaps never will be.

From this sincere presentation of the facts one thing immediately stands out: the immense part played by contingencies in the life of the Church. The theologian need not be afraid of this, but the historian has the right to ask whether there has not been an exaggeration of the importance of creeds for the history of the origins of Christianity. Canon Kelly, like others, establishes the existence of a stereotyped primitive catechesis; but unlike others he does so with an unusual wealth of proofs. Moreover he puts beyond dispute the dependence of the creed on baptism and its liturgical rite. He well demonstrates that the creed, in the sense in which we use the word, is directly related to the teaching of catechumens, and that the *redditio symboli* is second to the action of baptism which is primary. The creed indeed is only a function, both of Church teaching and of sacramental action. Hence it takes on a relative character which has perhaps not so far been emphasised. Consequently here we have the explanation of a fact with which historians, theologians and apologetes have often been preoccupied: the absence of certain

articles of faith from the creed. Only the points touched upon in the baptismal interrogation have found a place in the formulation of the creed. One need scarcely add that sacramental theology sees wide perspectives opening before it. The more so as there is practically no room for doubt, though Canon Kelly himself shows some hesitation on this point (*cf.* p. 48): the baptismal questions and answers indeed constituted the 'form' of baptism. The only other permissible solution is a desperate appeal to the discipline of the *arcana*. Further I cannot be persuaded that the famous Holl-Harnack-Lietzmann hypothesis concerning the insertion of the christological part, is well founded. This is an admirably constructed theory, but for all that it remains a construction and has no value apart from the adoption of certain pre-suppositions. Granted that the creed is dependent on the baptismal interrogation, the christological element concerning the Second Person is quite in place. This is the best explanation of the presence of this section in all the known creeds.

Canon Kelly puts forward a notion deserving of the greatest attention: formulae were held to be identical, and yet for all that they were not fixed. So the author arrives at a solution for the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan question (*cf.* pp. 322 sqq.) which is not only neat but also feasible. I think this notion should be resolutely applied to the whole history of the creeds. If this is done, a series of false problems will disappear, and time and labour will be saved which would otherwise be wasted in concentrating on accidental divergencies and in losing sight of the main objective. It should not be difficult, moreover, to find parallels in the development of the liturgy. I give the most striking instance since it touches the very heart of the Christian mystery: the variants of the consecration formulae of the Eucharist.

Canon Kelly underlines the fact that the Nicene Creed marks a turning point in the history of the creeds. From here onwards it is no longer a question of an episode in the formation of the Christian, but of the very touchstone of orthodoxy. Indeed this conception is not completely unexpected. The famous incident of the Christian baptised with an heretical 'creed' proves it (*cf.* pp. 47-48). A resumption of the question of the 'Creed of Lucian of Antioch' would have been in place here. About the later history of the acceptance of the decisions of Nicea, I am surprised that Canon Kelly has not used the invaluable testimony of the Cappadocians concerning the state of things in their churches and the important passage of Sozomen, III, 13, which so happily interprets the contemporary state of mind. However, in all this part of the book the author is at grips with a special difficulty. He is at pains to keep within the bounds of the specific problem of the creeds. But in the crisis of the fourth century the creeds are embedded

in an historical and doctrinal context from which it is difficult to isolate them. If this is the least original part of Canon Kelly's book, at least it must be admitted that he has succeeded in making it not unworthy of the rest of his fine exposition. I am sorry that from this point onwards he has leaned so heavily on classifications which are traditional but misleading. For instance, the distinction of 'western' and 'eastern' traditions is largely artificial. Two pointers to this may be indicated. Novatian in his *De Trinitate* is so close to 'eastern' theologians that often enough his book looks like a translation from the Greek. In the controversies of the two Dionysius, it is amazing to notice how much the problem is approached by both sides according to the same pattern: how to reconcile plurality in the heart of the One. Origen's solution of the transcending unity of the Father alone does not enter as a factor. If Canon Kelly had been critical of such an arbitrary classification, his description of the *Filioque* question would perhaps have been clearer.

However, all the verve of the first chapters is recaptured in the study of the Apostles' Creed and likewise in that of the introduction of the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed into the liturgy. These topics are of the greatest interest alike for the Church historian, the theologian and the liturgist. Here again one notices to what an extent Providence makes contingencies and the human factor plays a part in achieving the greatest good of the Church. After so many dry or aggressive works on the Creed, Canon Kelly's calm Christianity and scientific candour offer an attractive invitation to a consideration in the directly theological order.

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TRADITION OF FREEDOM. By Georges Bernanos. (Dobson; 8s. 6d.)

As I read this, the last book of Bernanos, that great modern prophet, the first line of a poem of Henri de Regnier repeated itself in my mind — 'Les grands vents venus d'outremer . . .'. To review Bernanos is to try to catch the west wind in a penny whistle. This book must be read and allowed to sweep the soul clean from the poisonous dust of the Machine Age.

'A world won to Technique is lost to Freedom.' This phrase is the key to the rest of the argument. Bernanos holds that what the modern world means by the word 'progress' is the perfecting of technique and the increasing subordination of man to its requirements. Dictatorship is the inevitable consequence, whether exercised by one man or by a so-called social democracy. Dictators do not drop from heaven. 'They are an emanation of the masses', for 'servitude is a vice that goes as deep into the nature of man as lust.' This lust for slavery is encouraged