

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE, by James D. Smart; S.C.M., 35s.

Although not exactly putting itself forward as such, this book is to a large extent an historical survey of the approaches, attitudes and methods of scriptural interpretation. In fact only the two final chapters (*The Death and Rebirth of Biblical Theology I and II*) explicitly claim to be historical. These, and less directly the preceding ones, by placing the problem firmly in the context of its historical development, are extremely valuable. It is by recognizing and depicting what is happening in the swings from one extreme to another that the author is able to reveal very clearly wherein lies the authentic mean. One is tempted to think that it might cause him surprise to discover how essentially Catholic in essence his 'solution' is, for he appears to be ignorant of any Catholic work in this field which has recently, at least, been highly relevant and of the first quality. In his rejection, and 'placing', of the two extremes of statistical objectivity and pure subjectivism the author settles down to a central position, the implications of which, if drawn out, would seem to be the need for a living *Churchly* tradition as the *regula* for biblical interpretation and theology. It is a helpful and encouraging book.

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THE PRAYERS OF MAN, by Alfonso di Nola; Heinemann, 50s.

This five-hundred page anthology of man's liturgical and semi-liturgical religious expression ranges from the primitive to the sophisticated; it covers everything from tribal God-invoking war cries (perhaps somewhat analogous to the way in which Christian ministers these days bless H-bombers) to the prayers and hymns of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-Day Adventists. Between these extremes together with Buddhist, Hindu and Mohammedan fragments is wedged a not unreasonable chunk of traditional Christian and Revivalist prayers. Its editor hopes that this selection will represent an exhaustive study of the central phenomenon of religious life (more so in fact than any study of mythology, dogma, etc.) seeking as it does to catch the suggestive rhythms of the eternal dialogue between man and God . . .

For those interested in traditional and Catholic prayer one cannot help recommending in contrast the far more satisfactory work of A. Hamman: *Early Christian Prayers* (Longmans, 1961). With regard to the rest of the work under review, it is difficult to see what value it could have apart from that of feeding insatiable appetites.

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