

Book Notes

In 1938 the Anglican Dom Gregory Dix prophesied, at the beginning of his celebrated series of articles *Jurisdiction in the Early Church, Episcopal and Papal*, 'For the next generation the nature of the Church . . . is certain to be the cardinal problem before Christian thought'. *Mystici Corporis*, Congar, Vatican II and the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's current dialogue on authority have shown how right he was, and there could not be a better moment for the reissue of the articles in book form (The Church Literature Association, 75p). Another timely reissue is A. T. Hanson's *The Pioneer Ministry* (SPCK, £2.50) . . . timely because, like Dix's book, it now has something to say to a much wider range of Christians, not solely Anglicans on the 'high'/'low' see-saw. Much more ephemeral is the same author's very readable *Church, Sacraments and Ministry* (Mowbrays, £6; £2.95 paper), which shows a wide awareness of recent RC and Orthodox developments but is useful mainly as a statement of the present-day liberal Anglican view. Read alongside these books the texts in *Modern Ecumenical Documents on the Ministry* (SPCK, £1.50).

After Hanson it is a jolt to read Michael Schmaus's *Dogma 5 : The Church as Sacrament* (Sheed & Ward, £2.50), which should be a very useful handbook for RC seminarians but is much less open to 'dialogue' and much more conservative (e.g. on the original founding of the sacraments and on the role of the wife in marriage) than the blurb claims. And you will have yet another jolt if, turning next to an Orthodox author, you read Alexander Schmemmann's *Of Water and the Spirit* (SPCK, £2.75). This looks like a book solely concerned with arguing for the centrality of baptism and the lasting appropriateness of the traditional Orthodox baptismal rites—a product of a backward ecclesiasticism, in other words. In fact what Schmemmann is basically setting out to do is stress the urgent need to reunite liturgy and theology, and he does it well.

What a different important point is being made in Robert Van de Weyer's *Guru Jesus* (SPCK, £1.95). Composed of pages from a personal diary, this is a refreshingly honest if unobtrusive account of a young man's journey from agnosticism on through India to experimenting in 'taking Jesus for his guru', only *after* which he 'gradually came to believe in a supernatural God'. But is there really such a huge gap between his spirituality and that of the fourteenth-century mystic Walter Hilton, whose treatise *The Scale of Perfection* has been ably abridged (to its benefit, I think) by Illyd Trethowan (Chapman, £2.25)?

Sociology ought not to be taught at GCE O level, but it is, and for people who will persist in doing it at that level John Scotson's *Introducing Society* (Routledge, £2.40; £1.20 paper; 95p limp) is a sensibly arranged guide. It is hardly fair to mention in the same paragraph *A Constant Burden*, Margaret Voysey's skilful and perspicacious sociological analysis of the family coping with the disabled child and of the 'official morality of family life' such a family is pressed to conform with (Routledge, £5.95). For a sobering-up, well-intending intelligent Christians should read its last two chapters, 'The Legitimation of Suffering' and 'Acceptance and Adjustment'. Talking of intelligence, to anybody who read Herbert McCabe's editorial of March 1974 intelligently (and, alas, a handful did not) it was surely evident that *New Blackfriars* does not take a woolly liberal line on homosexuality . . . which is precisely why I can urge you to read critically and carefully the SCM pamphlet *Towards a Theology of Gay Liberation* (SCM Publications, 14 Prince Arthur Tce., Dublin 6; 40p incl post). (Finally for the aspiring lay counsellor Jack Dominian's *Depression* (DLT, £5; Fontana, 85p paper) is an excellent introduction, say our Samaritan friends, and our lawyer friends equally strongly recommend as unique in its field Chris Smith's and David C. Hoath's *Law and the Underprivileged* (Routledge, £5.95; £2.95 paper).

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