

THE HISTORY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. By Jules Lebreton, S.J., and Jacques Zeiller. Translated from the French by Ernest C. Messenger, Ph.D. Vol. III. The Church in the Third Century, Part I. (Burns Oates; 18s.)

It is difficult to determine the exact public in England for which this translation is intended. Perhaps it was planned as a textbook to be used in seminaries and some convents. It will be found admirably suited to such a purpose by those who hold that ecclesiastical history is a subject complete in itself. Both authors possess solid learning, strong orthodoxy, and a capacity for clear exposition. The translation is simple, lucid and direct. There are, of course, occasional misprints, e.g., *arcae* for *arcae*, and classical names at times preserve their French forms, as in the case of *Eutrope*. But such slight slips are inevitable among so much crowded detail. Probably most of the sections in the present volume contain at least one statement that specialists would like to question; the remark that the *Didache* was composed thirty or forty years earlier than the *Shepherd of Hermas* (p. 533) is only one rather obvious example. But this is a flaw inherent in all textbook technique. The bibliography is at times misleading, thus the *Historia Augusta* is quoted frequently without any discussion of its authenticity. The treatment of third-century Græco-Roman history is frankly inadequate. But both these defects can be remedied if the book is used in conjunction with Dom Basil Steidl's *Patrologia* and the last volume of the *Cambridge Ancient History*.

G.M.

THE WAY OF LIFE ACCORDING TO LAOTZU. Translated by Witter Bynner. (Editions Poetry London; 4s. 6d.)

The translator of this version of the *Tao Teh Ching* has the advantage of being honest. He tells us that he cannot read Chinese though he has had two years' experience of life in China and has collaborated in Chinese translation with Dr Kiang Kang-hu. He also reveals himself in his introduction as an anarchist in religion, admitting of no laws or outward ceremonies, damning all priests and popes. He considers that with this background he is well fitted to present a modern, un-academic, not-too-literal translation of a work which has been done into English by Arthur Waley himself. The modern craze for modern versions necessarily opens the way to excessive interpretation. Having reversed the old exegetical principle that the more difficult version is to be preferred, the new translator jumps at the clearest meaning, which is only too liable to be the one he himself understands best. The reader will therefore pick up this present translation of the book of *Tao* with extreme caution. He will find 'charity' used in a pejorative sense; he will notice a stress on the evils of words and limitation of understanding; and he will be unable to miss the condemnation of codes. All this may be Laotzu; but the reader will harbour his suspicions and wonder