

Luke's thought on Mary and on the cross. He suggests that the first two chapters of Luke's gospel are designed to figure forth a progress to a manifestation of Christ in Jerusalem, which hints at a later progress. As the death of Christ on the cross would be nothing without the resurrection, Mary's virginity would be mere wretchedness without the incarnation. Like the cross, Mary represents the weakness of the flesh, a weakness made strong by the vivifying action of the Spirit. The cause of contempt, the lowly condition of the servant, is made a universal wonder, 'this divine weakness is stronger than men' (I Corinthians i. 23). In Hebrew thought the woman's part in conception was totally passive. According to the flesh the womb that bore Jesus was inert. In Mary human capacity was totally renounced. In her weakness the Spirit created a new order. Mary's surrender shews us that our surrender to the will of God will produce a new glory in our lives.

I once asked a Sixth Former who could at most times be expected to give an honest reply, 'What do you think of priests?' He said, 'Well, some of them obviously do useful work, and doubtless we must have someone to say mass for us, but on the whole they appear to have escaped life. When I think of my father and the way he has to work and worry to bring us up, the priests often look like second class citizens'. I think that now, having read Legrand's book, I might make, in replying, at least a better explanation of what Christian virginity means.

HAMISH SWANSTON

ON BEING SURE IN RELIGION, by Ian T. Ramsey; the Athlone Press, 12s. 6d.

'We can be sure of God, yet tentative about our theology' (p. 23). Well, what is it to be sure of God? Is it mainly a feeling of present security and devotion, or does it include as an essential ingredient the conviction that God has acted mightily on our behalf in the past, and will do so again in future? If it is the latter, the theology in which we give rational articulation to our faith must not be so tentative as to gloss over this conviction.

As the author sees it, there are three major lessons to be learned from F. D. Maurice, the great nineteenth century Anglican theologian (on whose thought this book is largely a commentary), on the question of the nature of theological certainty. Of these, the first is the 'need to peg back all our assertions into an awareness of God', the second 'the need to be circumspect of any too extensive systematization, of any cut-and-dried theology' (p. 16). But however great an evil systematization may be, it is impossible that any department of language should at least be systematic enough to avoid radical ambiguity. Are theological statements to be evaluated wholly or chiefly in proportion to their expression or evocation of religious experience—as seems to be assumed by the first of these lessons? Or do they state matters of objective fact to which religious devotion and its attendant feelings are the appropriate response? Religious

language ought, surely, to be at least systematic enough to make this distinction clear. The older creeds and confessions certainly did so; but much modern re-interpretation of them brings them to the point where the distinction is obliterated. I think it is a serious fault of this book that it shows no awareness of this distinction or of the problems which it raises for contemporary theology.

If we can really be sure of God in a way in which we cannot be sure of theology we surely ought to be able to state, if only in the most general terms, what it is that we are sure of. If it is of the availability of religious experience, our assurance is relatively trivial. If it is that a new order of creation is being brought into existence wherein the dead will be raised, the hungry filled, and the mourners comforted, our certainty of it is the most important of all possible certainties. But if all of the traditional religious language which seemed to state or to presuppose this certainty is to be reinterpreted in terms of present religious experience, contemporary theology ought at least to make this clear. If it is not to be, then some kind of boundary should be laid down, beyond which, when a putative reinterpretation is ventured, it may be re-classed as a statement quite different from that statement or statements of which it claims to be the reinterpretation.

The book is most stimulating and full of interesting detail, which makes me regret the proportion of this review which I have had to devote to adverse criticism.

HUGO MEYNELL

CORNELIA CONNELLY: A STUDY IN FIDELITY, by Mother Marie Therese; S.H.C.J.; Burns and Oates, 35s.

The life of Cornelia Connelly is surely one of the strangest studies in how sanctity is achieved—if indeed sanctity was achieved by her, and the volume under review presents a most persuasive case for thinking so—but it also gives an extraordinarily comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of Catholicism in the nineteenth century, and of the position of Catholics in England after emancipation and later with the restoration of the hierarchy. Cornelia had not only to contend with her own personal problems, which were agonising in the extreme (though the evidence seems to indicate that the decisions here were largely taken out of her hands). She was also the victim of the Catholic situation in England at the time, in which the old Catholics, the converts and the Irish mistrusted and disliked each other, and everyone was terrified of the effect of their actions upon their Protestant neighbours. The whole story is a most instructive object-lesson in how good people can behave abominably from what they take to be the best motives.

Cornelia's own character emerges as composed of contrasts which were understandably disconcerting to those around her. Following her husband's initiative in first studying Catholicism at all, obedient (though protesting) to