

up immense treasures, and it deserves a serious effort on our part to make it our own.

R. A. NOEL

CHURCH ORDER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Eduard Schweizer; S.C.M. Press, 16s.

This latest translation in the *Studies in Biblical Theology* series (No. 32) is an important contribution to the contentious debate on the ordering of the early Church. Professor Schweizer shows reverence, scholarship and clarity in his study. Although his arguments are on the strongly Protestant lines one would naturally expect from a former minister of the Reformed Church of Switzerland, this book confirms the respect which his earlier studies have already earned him. His explicit concern here is not so much with the historical development of the Church as with what he calls the 'theological problem of how the Church understood itself, and how it expressed that understanding in its order'. Church history, he says, can help in the task of interpretation, but it cannot absolve us from constantly returning to the source in scripture; for it may be that the history of the Church reflects its *misunderstanding* of its own nature and function. After an opening chapter justifying reliance almost exclusively on scripture (oral tradition as a source is implicitly discounted), Schweizer examines the conception of the Church held by Jesus himself and also by the primitive Church in Jerusalem, before leading us, in the main part of the book, through a fairly detailed treatment of the views on Church order exhibited by the various parts of the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers. A shorter second part of the book contains studies of particular aspects of the scriptural problem, such as the notions of office, charismatic ministries and apostolic succession.

The New Testament contains two diverging lines on which the conception of the Church developed, Schweizer believes. On one line, Luke's recognition that the Church is the *subject* of a history, filling out the time between the resurrection and the parousia, led to further development in the Pastoral Epistles. Here, as in Luke, the Church is seen as living through an extended history while awaiting the coming of the Lord; but its own existence it now feels to be a static one rather than a developing historical factor. Now that it is firmly established, it is the Church's function to remain as it is and to hold on to what has been attained: it is primarily a guarantor of the truth and a custodian of right doctrine. Timothy and Titus are appointed as reliable and orthodox bearers of the Word. Schweizer sees this trend towards consolidation extended to the ordered structure of the Church in the First Letter of Clement to Corinth. Here he discerns a hierarchy of non-charismatic ministry that is purely technical in character, since this is all that is required for being reliable and free from risk. This line of development is characterized by loss of touch with the risen Christ, and by an over-valuation of office and order that leads to separation between an active priesthood and a passive laity.

At the extreme of the other branch of thought in the New Testament, Schweizer places St John's epistles. Here the Church is seen as belonging exclusively to the risen Lord, in its faith and life taken right out of time and history; it is set free from the world, but remains a witness to the world as a light in the darkness. No Christian needs anyone other than the Spirit to teach him. There are neither offices, nor even different charismata, nor any need for a hierarchical order in the Church. There is only direct union with God through the Spirit who comes to every individual.

These two lines of thought about the Church are clearly reflected in early credal formulae in the New Testament. (On this aspect, readers are referred to Schweizer's earlier book *Lordship and Discipleship*, which appeared in English in the same series, No. 28. See review in *Life of the Spirit* for June, 1960). The first view, which sees the Church as making its historical way through the world, is characterized by cultic passages that look back to the cross and resurrection (e.g. I Cor. 15. 3-5). The other is shown in formulations which look 'up' to the heavenly Lord, and relate to his incarnation and exaltation in glory (e.g. the hymn I Tim. 3. 16). These two theological standpoints naturally lead to corresponding views of Church order—on the one hand a human hierarchical despotism (which Schweizer ascribes to Rome), and on the other anarchy. The proper, mediate course for the Church, he holds, is to conform itself to the influence of both the freedom and the faithfulness of God, to the exclusion of neither. A definite order is necessary, but it must never become an inflexible master. All believers share in Christ's priesthood: there is no laity. Each member is to minister according to his gift. The Church is to appoint its ministers by assessing the charisms God has granted to each individual, and decide the limits of each ministry accordingly. Beyond this there is no further relevance of 'office' in the Church.

Our thanks are certainly due to the author for his useful examination of the divergent trends in the New Testament. But it is perhaps open to doubt whether the division is in fact as deep as he believes. It is true, for example, that John's epistles contain little sign of a definite structure in the Church; but surely this is simply because he is not there concerned with any question of the Church's order. He explicitly addresses those who are already Christians but whose orthodox faith is now endangered by the advance of a popular heretical movement. Again and again he appeals to them to abide in what they heard from the beginning, and nine times he offers them tests by which to assure themselves of the truth of the Christian position (e.g. 'By this we may be sure we know him . . .', etc.). In such letters to members of the Church, why should its familiar *structure* be reflected? John is appealing for continued adherence to the Gospel message, and it is only natural that his appeal should not refer to ecclesiastical order. According to Schweizer, on the other hand, John's purpose is to save his readers from a hierarchical Church; and this interpretation is founded on 3 Jn 9. Diotrephes was a 'monarchical bishop who wanted to rule everything', and personifies the whole tendency towards institutionalism to

which Schweizer thinks John's epistles are a deliberate reaction. The tendency exemplified in the Pastorals, on the other hand, Schweizer presents as a reaction against fanatical gnosticism. In fact, however, is it not certain that the Epistles of John were written in the face of attacks on Christian churches by, precisely, some form of pre-gnosticism? To this fundamental context of the Epistles the Diotrephes episode is purely incidental: John's views about order in the Church are simply not exposed. This method of reading views on Church order into all New Testament writings, whether or not they actually reflect it, has resulted in considerable distortion in this book.

Moreover, in order to reach his conclusions Schweizer has found it necessary to reject the testimony of the earliest of the Apostolic Fathers on Church order in their time, as deviations from Christ's intentions. His whole thesis denies any authentic tradition outside scripture, and he even treats some of the later canonical books (the Pastorals, Ephesians and Colossians) as already suspect. Finally, Schweizer asserts the need for the Church to take stock of itself and of its order in each age by immediate and fresh reference to the message of the New Testament. What is lacking from his analysis is the admission that it is possible for Christ's Church to develop authentically by reference not only to scripture but also to Jesus living in the Church itself continuously to the present day. And did the Holy Spirit, the promised strengthener and guide, defect so soon?

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*SPIRIT OF FLAME* and *MOTHER OF CARMEL*, by Allison Peers; S.C.M. Press, 7s. 6d. each.

In the Church's mysteries, the flaming candle and the waters of the font together symbolize her power of regeneration. In *Spirit of Flame* and *Mother of Carmel* the two great Spanish saints whose favourite symbols of the divine action were fire and water, are portrayed in their complementary role in regenerating not only the religious family of Carmel but the spirit of contemplative prayer in the Church.

Professor Allison Peers' study of St John of the Cross is a masterpiece of short biography. His wide scholarship gives precision and depth to this most readable story and the very fair presentation of the religious turmoil which forms the background of St John's life shows both tact and skill. He owes his debt to contemporary biographies with what one can only describe as reverent humour. Peers' keen literary perception highlights his appreciation of the Saint's writings: his own style becomes lyrical in appraising the poems, in particular the *Spiritual Canticle*. Indeed, in his enthusiasm for the form of the stanzas he shows some detachment from the underlying theology. The splendid alignment of the teaching of St John of the Cross with scripture, in the second part of the book (which takes the form almost of an apologia for the mystic