

Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien, von DR MICHAEL RACKL, Prof. der Theologie in Eichstätt. (Herdersche Verlags-handlung, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1914.)

THIS is a very able defence of the genuineness of the seven Ignatian letters against Daniel Völter. It may seem strange to many readers that this should be necessary after the work of Zahn and Lightfoot. Indeed, Harnack could write in 1890: 'He who considers the Ignatian letters spurious has not studied them thoroughly enough.'¹ But Völter draws a distinction between the letter to the Romans and the six letters for Asia Minor. The latter he assigns to a certain Theophorus writing about the year A.D. 150, whom he identifies with the Peregrinus Proteus of whom Lucian writes, and supposes that Peregrinus Proteus wrote them in his Christian period before he became a Cynic. Fantastic as this theory may appear, I am glad that Dr Rackl should take it seriously and refute it point by point. After that he has a right to speak of 'its inner impossibility', and of the gaps in the argument.

The way is then clear for consideration of the Ignatian Christology in itself (pp. 87-289), and of the importance of the Ignatian letters for the history of Dogma (pp. 291-401).

Dr Rackl deals first with the well-worn theme of the Docetism which Ignatius combated, concluding that these Docetists were not Gnostics. He then discusses the teaching of Ignatius on the true Manhood of Christ, and his testimony to the authority of the Bible, to the truth of Redemption, and to Christ's example of virtue, leading up to discussion of belief in Him as Messiah, true God and Son of God. He analyses carefully every phrase in the letters which has any bearing on the question, and defends Ignatius against the charges of Subordinationism and Patripassianism. His conclusion is that 'it is not true, as is commonly asserted, that Ignatius derives the Divine Sonship of Christ from the moment of the Incarnation as though Christ were the Son of God because by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost He was conceived and born of a Virgin. On the contrary Ignatius teaches (*Smyrn.* i 1) that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because of His divine power and His divine will, as He is the Son of Man because of His fleshly, that is, His human nature.'

In Part II Dr Rackl discusses the Biblical sources from which Ignatius drew his teaching and the advance which he made in the formulation of theological language, as when He says of the Logos that He became 'man' in the fullest sense of the word, not simply that He became 'flesh' (*Smyrn.* iv 2).

¹ *Theol. L.Z.* N. 15, S. 374.

Finally he discusses the influence of the Ignatian letters on later Patristic writers and their importance at the present time. He leaves it an open question 'whether the Ignatian formulas presuppose a Creed in the literal and exact sense of the word, or whether we must look upon them as an unofficial compendium of the Christian faith'.

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Theological Symbolics, by the late C. A. BRIGGS, D.D., D.Litt. (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1914.)

MANY will regret that Dr Briggs did not live to revise the whole of this book for the Press, while we are grateful for the loving care bestowed upon it by his daughter, Miss Emilie Grace Briggs, 'long a co-worker', and by an anonymous friend. Mr Francis Brown contributes a sympathetic prefatory note, in which he sums up the author's purpose: 'In the analysis and comparison of creeds and confessions he was not influenced by zeal for private interpretations, but animated by the longing to bring to view underlying harmonies, and to shew the prevailing and essential oneness of the various official statements of belief put forth by the Church and its divided parts through the Christian centuries. His conception was a large one, and the expression of it in this book is profoundly sincere and impressive.'

Such words disarm criticism, but they are somewhat at variance with the melancholy conclusion on p. 411: 'Christian Symbolics seems to have brought us to a situation in which the reunion of Christ's Church is impossible as far as Faith is concerned.' Dr Briggs follows this up on his last page (p. 412) with suggestions for a great Federation of Churches formed after the model of the United States of America. He has not tried to work out his proposal in detail, but it is the very sense of failure in the present as in the past, based on wide and accurate knowledge such as he possessed, which brings us to the dawn of a new hope, that where reason fails love may prevail. He would build on the irenic principle of an obscure but fascinating writer of the seventeenth century, Rupertus Meldenius: '*In necessariis unitas, in non necessariis libertas, in utrisque caritas.*'

The proposals which have been put forward for a World Conference on Faith and Order are still inchoate, but Dr Briggs has done a service to all students by placing in their hands this handy encyclopaedia on the subject of fundamental Christian Faith.

He distinguishes between *Fundamental*, *Particular*, and *Comparative* Symbolics. Under Fundamental Symbolics he classes the study of the Ecumenical Creeds and Conciliar Decrees. He begins with a useful summary of the history of the Creeds, with references to recent literature,