

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

whether a language so remote from his own can be rendered justly by so biased and unintelligent a translator.

Nevertheless some good Taoisms come through these barriers, and the version is useful in its presentation and quite happily phrased. It is a text which those who are interested in the present universal 'mysticism' popularised by Aldous Huxley should acquire and study. It reveals many of the weaknesses and the attractions of this new religion, which claims Laotzu for one of its prophets. The candour of the translator will lead the student to analyse with the help of this text present day Taoism rather than the words of an ancient Chinese sage.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE RAGPICKERS' PRIEST. By Joseph A. Mullins, C.S.Sp. (Mercier Press, Cork; 6s).

In January 1931 Jean Frederic Lamy finally abandoned his attempt to found a new religious congregation which would devote itself to the needs of French youth. His last apostolic effort ended in failure. After his death in 1931 the congregation revived and, as foretold by the founder, since 1941 has been established at Ourscamp under the protection of the Cistercians. These 'Servants of Jesus and Mary' are quietly being trained for an apostolate among French youth, and only time will show the part it is to play in the great work for youth being carried out by the Church in France. In inspiration it would seem to be one of those foundations due to the special intervention of our Lady whose constant appearances all over the world in these days are one of the significant facts of modern history.

Indeed Fr Lamy's whole life seems to have been influenced by visions of our Lady from that of the Immaculate Conception in 1863 until he died with her name on his lips. There were the visions of our Lady and Satan, disputing; the command given to set up the shrine of Notre Dame du Bois; the weeping statue, and many others. For Fr Lamy did very many things before his final failure. For fifteen years he ran an Institute for the young in the industrial district of Troyes, then after a brief attempt at founding an orphanage, he worked for the ragpickers of St Ouen for eight years. Finally, as *curé* at La Corneuve until 1923 he devoted himself wholly to the service of the poor, indifferent peasants and those inert souls brought to the parish by an encroaching industrialism. This is the life of a poor French priest with all the wondrous devotion and self-sacrifice of which that class is capable. Yet an extraordinary intervention of the supernatural in his life seems certain, and without doubt the evidence will one day be submitted to the Church's judgment. Certainly the apparitions are remarkable, sometimes almost playful, but significant. Our Lady condemns Modernism, the decay of family life, the desecration of Sunday, the insubordination of minds,