

Blackfriars

THE MYSTERY OF FAITH AND HUMAN OPINION CONTRASTED AND DEFINED. By Maurice de la Taille, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 15/-.)

First in this oddly named volume stands an essay entitled *An Outline of the Mystery of Faith*, being a presentation for a wider circle of readers of the thesis on the Sacrifice of Calvary and the Mass that was so much discussed by theologians when it first appeared in the author's well-known Latin work *Mysterium Fidei*. This is followed by elucidations and by other essays on kindred subjects.

There can be no question here of reviewing the teaching of the volume in detail. Let it suffice to say that we disagree with at least part of the principal thesis, but that in such excellent papers as those on 'Mass Offerings' and 'The Real Presence and its Sacramental Function' we find nothing to criticise and very much to admire. But whether we agreed or disagreed with the author's argument, his manner of writing theology was at all times a joy. We can think of no other word for it but 'generous.' Immense learning, a wide sweep of argument, great power of clear presentation, eloquence of language, a sense of the place of the part in the ultimate whole—the book opens with the sentence: 'The first duty of man is the surrender of himself to the divine goodness, which is worthy of all love' (p. 5)—all combine to make his exposition edifying in the noblest sense of that word.

This said, we may be allowed to regret the inclusion of the controversial papers in the second part of the volume. We are not denying that the author often had the better of the argument, but the note of impatience that is to be found in them, though hardly surprising at the time, clashes with the serener note of the earlier essays. Had they been omitted not much would have been lost, and it would no doubt have been possible to issue the book at a much lower price. Which brings us to another point. We are told that while most of the papers in the second part were written by the author himself in English, those in the first part have been translated from the French by Fr. Schimpf, an American Jesuit. In such a high-priced and important volume the translator might have been expected to exercise more care. We give a few instances of a slovenliness that is continually cropping up; p. 122, 'from who'; p. 133, 'it does not seem that any account should be taken of the many instances of "celebration of masses" by lay persons, men or women, whom Berlendi has collected in the same part of his work.' (I take it that it was the instances that Berlendi

collected). P. 137, 'the practice prevailed of not admitting the public to the offertory at these masses, and not to give them communion'; p. 144, 'Peter Cantor,' p. 145, 'Peter Chantre'; p. 183, 'Joannes A. S. Thoma.'

We may add that the publishers have since published the first essay of the above work separately at the price of half-a-crown under the title of *The Mystery of Faith, An Outline*.

THE HOUSE OF THE TEMPLE. By Frederick W. Ryan. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne; pp. xvi, 346; 25/-.)

This handsome and well illustrated volume deals with the last days of the sovereignty at Malta of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John. The 'House of the Temple' was the Headquarters and Embassy of the Order in Paris, granted to them on the fall of the Templars. Whereas in London the Hospitallers kept their original house at Clerkenwell and let the Temple to the lawyers, in Paris the Temple became their principal centre; a large fortified domain which by the time of the French Revolution had been encircled by the growth of the city and was in the middle of a busy quarter. It was a strange survival of mediaevalism, a fortress of a foreign power in the centre of the capital. We follow the story of its last days, ending with the event which was to make the House immortal; the coming of the Royal Family to be imprisoned in its central tower. The second half of the book deals in like manner with the fortunes of the Order at Malta itself, the death of the great De Rohan, who if he had lived on in full vigour might perhaps have saved the Order; the succession, as Grand Master, of the weak von Hompesch, whose German nationality, made him a disastrous choice at that moment; and finally the capture of the Island in the interests of the Republic by Buonaparte and the expulsion of the Knights, only to be followed, almost immediately, after the Battle of the Nile, by a voluntary surrender to the British, whose hold over the Island has lasted ever since.

It is a study of the great Order in its decadence and at the end of its real power, but a story, nevertheless, full of interest. Perhaps some day Mr. Ryan will go on to write another book of even greater interest which would put before us the work done by the Hospitallers for the sick through the centuries; at Rhodes first and afterwards at Malta; a work which was faithfully continued to the last, even in the days when so much else of their rule was being neglected at the close of the 18th century.

A.S.B.