

REVIEWS

PATRISTICS

THE RIDDLE OF THE DIDACHE. By F. E. Vokes. (S.P.C.K.; 12s. 6d.)

A generation ago there was an almost general agreement on the proximate dating and the probable purpose of the *Didache*. The exaggerated scepticism of Dr. Cotteril and of Dr. Bigg, which had been the immediate sequel to its discovery in 1883, had barely influenced the study of its origins. It was now commonly held that it was a Church Order of the early second or even the late first century and perhaps no document more deeply influenced the early twentieth century conception of the first developments of organized Christian life. Since 1920 there has been a reaction against such an estimate. This has been primarily associated with English and American scholarship. It has been directed by Dean Armitage Robinson, Dom Connolly and Dr. Muilenberg, and has been most successful when most destructive. The theory of the early dating and the orthodox provenance of the *Didache* has been reduced to one hypothesis among many; its proofs have vanished. It is no longer possible to assert it had enjoyed wide authority in the pre-Nicene Church or that it was utilized by 'Barnabas' or that it was quoted by Clement of Alexandria as Scripture. But the alternative suggestion that it is merely a Montanist compilation has not yet met with any very wide acceptance. It is precisely this common state of poised indecision which gives Mr. Vokes's study its special value.

It would be too early to suggest that *The Riddle of the Didache* has provided a definitive solution but it is the most detailed study yet undertaken in the light of cumulative research. Naturally, it would be possible to criticise some details of the treatment. The title is not fortunate. It gives, unjustly, a slight flavour of the detective school of scholarship. It is to be regretted that Professor Creed's admirably balanced survey of the controversies on the *Didache* could not be utilized; it is the clearest defence of a modified traditional standard and his paper at Oxford was delivered some months before the publication of Mr. Vokes's volume. On page 120 we should read *Nicephorus for Bryennius*. In the present state of our knowledge it is perhaps too definite to term the Pseudo-Cyprianic *Adversus Alectores* 'an African writing' (p. 206). In the discussion on the presumed references to the *Didache* in the writings of Clement

of Alexandria (pp. 74-76) use might have been made of Dr. Stählin's suggestion on the bearing of the word 'graphe' in this context. But these are trivial points compared to that sober and detailed scholarship which characterises *The Riddle of the Didache* throughout.

Mr. Vokes's conclusions are allied to those of Dom Connolly and perhaps ultimately inspired by Dr. Armitage Robinson. 'The *Didache* was a work of the end of the second or the beginning of the third century A.D.' (p. 216); 'The *Didache* can only be set comfortably in the context of the early stages of the Montanist movement' (p. 145). He deals in turn with its text, with its relationship to other pre-Nicene writings, to Scripture and to Montanism. No work could mark more clearly the present stage towards certainty reached by our knowledge of the *Didache*.

It now seems clear that it is no longer necessary to suspect one portion of the Bryennios text more than another. The ending still suggests that it is incomplete, there is no strong evidence that it is interpolated. The so-called 'interpolation' therefore can be used in evidence in any discussion of its literary dependence. It is now certain that it is dependent on the *Epistle* of Barnabas. It is very probable that it is dependent on the *Shepherd* of Hermas. It is obvious that there is some close relationship to the first *Apology* of Justin. But 'Barnabas' can only be dated tentatively as presumably by an Alexandrian apparently writing between 70 and 132 A.D. The *Shepherd* now seems to have been a composite document perhaps fifty years in growth, and it still seems possible to explain the links of the *Didache* with the first *Apology* by indebtedness to a common source. All that can be proved from such analysis is that it is improbable that it was written earlier than 140 and impossible that it should be written earlier than the first quarter of the second century. On the other hand the close verbal parallels in the *Didascalia* and many more ambiguous reminiscences prove that either the *Didache*, or a vanished Church Order whose text was at times identical with it, already existed in the third century.

A rather similar conclusion may be reached by an analysis of the relationship to the New Testament canon. It is here that Mr. Vokes is most constructive. It now seems patent that the *Didache* is to a great extent a verbal mosaic of scripture texts. It seems improbable that such a document should be composed earlier than 140. But if Dr. Harrison's recent study of Polycarp is accepted as definitive it is clear that such a technique is

very compatible with an orthodox milieu by the middle of the second century.

It is precisely the question of the orthodoxy of its milieu which most affects the estimate of its value as a witness to normal Christian practice. It now seems clear that the *Didache* had some relation to the Montanist movement. But the absence of any reference to the Prophetesses and the conventionally orthodox character of its apocalypse renders it very improbable that it emanated from fully developed Montanism except as a deliberate forgery and it seems highly unlikely that a deliberate forgery should remain so colourless and so apparently ingenuous. It is possible, as Mr. Vokes suggests, that the *Didache* is the product of an early stage in Montanism. It is possible that it is related to some variant of *Ur-Montanism*, long forgotten. In either case it is impossible to dogmatise on its relationship to normal Church practice; the sources of Montanism are still too obscure. And its 'heterodoxy' has too often been over-stressed. At least to the reviewer, it would seem premature to assert that the *Didache* was never used as a normal Church Order in the Great Church. But it would now seem impossible to utilize it as an independent authority for normal Christian custom. This may seem a very negative result for the work of so many patristic scholars. But it is at least tenable that a negative result has always been the best evidence of positive scholarship.

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PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

PHILOSOPHIE DE LA PHYSIQUE MODERNE. By Emile Rideau.
(Editions du Cerf; 7 frs.)

In view of the widespread belief that natural science stands in its own right as an alternative and more reliable road to truth than philosophy, considerable interest attaches to the treatment given it by the schools of *philosophia perennis*; yet so far they have produced only one full-scale work dealing with modern physics in its philosophical setting (namely, M. Maritain's *Degrees of Knowledge*). It is to be hoped that Professor Rideau's short, compact and non-technical book from the *Editions du Cerf* will help to bring before Thomists the need for further studies and for *vulgarisation*. It is not always realised by Thomists that physical science does not use, and is in seeming conflict with, the fundamental concepts of their philosophy: it has no place for the analogy of being, for potency and act, for the four