

REVIEWS

INITIATION THEOLOGIQUE. Par un groupe de théologiens. Tome I: Les Sources de la Théologie, 1,050 francs. Tome II: Dieu et sa Création, 1,200 francs. (Les Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars Publications.)

Too long have intelligent and inquiring lay-people had to wait for a simple, concise yet comprehensive handbook of theology, and too long have theologians been hard put to it to find a work which they could recommend without misgivings to fill the need. There have indeed been innumerable outlines, very varying in merit, of purely scholastic theology, but even when these were methodically sound, they omitted that presentation of the biblical and traditional data which the inexpert most urgently requires. Excellent as were such German works as those of Scheeben and Schmaus, they were often too cumbersome, sometimes too advanced, for the purposes of the beginner.

The idea of this *Initiation théologique* originated, we are told, with the late Père Sertillanges, who is also among its contributors. It is intended not only for layfolk, but for seminarists and other students for the priesthood, and also for religious sisters. It is hoped that Church students will find it valuable to supplement (and, the authors clearly intend, to offset and correct) the conventional theological manuals of our day. It is addressed to religious sisters because, 'l'émancipation de la femme dans tous les milieux comporte une croissance de sa culture; le développement actuel du statut régulier des moniales et des actives doit donc comporter parallèlement un développement de sa culture théologique'. The reviewer, belonging to none of these categories, is unable to decide whether the work is as well adapted to their needs as he would expect and would like to believe. He would however point out that the book's approach is strictly theological, and that it is intended for those of the household of the faith rather than for the enlightenment or persuasion of non-catholics. It is its particular merit that it avoids that jumble of catechesis, theology and 'apologetic' that makes too many doctrinal books so confusing and misleading.

The work, when complete, will consist of four well-packed, but slender and handy, volumes, of which the first two are now published. The first consists of ten chapters under the general heading of 'Theological Sources', and a number of appendices and tables. The first chapter covers the 'Word of God' and the general conception of theological data and sources. Subsequent chapters provide a general introduction to the Scriptures, to the Liturgy as a theological source, to Canon Law (it should perhaps be explained

more clearly what this is doing in this context), to the Fathers and Creeds, to the traditions of the Eastern churches, to the Ecumenical Councils, to Christian iconography and its place in theology, and to the methods and aims of systematic theology. Experts may occasionally shiver at the somewhat cavalier and assured way in which some moot points are treated; they should however remember that the book is not for them (though few among them could not learn much from it), and that thoroughness and precision of detail, especially on difficult and delicate points still under discussion, are neither possible nor desirable in a work of 'initiation'. But even the beginner and the general reader should perhaps be warned that not all the book's assertions are of equal certainty, nor impervious to revision on further study and reflection. The tables include a Chronology from Abraham to the present day. (It even includes Elizabeth II of England, but the effect is somewhat spoilt by the fact that Her Majesty and her immediate predecessors are all included in the 'Maison de Hanovre'.)

The work starts in earnest with the second volume, which covers the subject-matter, and follows the order, of the First Part of St Thomas's *Summa Theologica*; Volumes III and IV will correspond to the Second and Third Parts of the *Summa*. We can have nothing but praise for the manner and method with which the various authors (mostly, but not entirely, Dominican) have approached their task. Again, we might query some points of detail. Perhaps not all the contributions are of quite equal merit. But the authors have succeeded in knitting their several contributions into an organic unity, and each presents his material with a refreshing straightforwardness.

Elementary though the work is, and is intended to be, it witnesses to a genuine theological renaissance in our time, for which the professional no less than the amateur theologian should be truly grateful.

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RELIGION AND THE DECLINE OF CAPITALISM. The Holland Lectures for 1949. By V. A. Demant. (Faber and Faber; 12s. 6d.)

As its name implies, Dr Demant's volume of Holland Lectures forms a kind of sequel to the now-famous first lectures in this series, R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, published originally in 1926. Tawney dealt, in terms which caused no little controversy at the time, with the social, economic and religious changes through which, by the peak of the Industrial Revolution, economic life as a whole had escaped from the control of the social and ethical sanctions formerly ruling it, and had attained its own autonomous standards, by which all things