

a great, a very great artist and genius, but (as the Cambridge Professor Raleigh used to say of him) 'a wiser personage than his bitter critic Macaulay'. and also a thoroughly likeable and even lovable man.

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RUSSIA AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH. By Vladimir Solovyev. Translated by Herbert Rees. (Bles; 15s.)

In view of the interest in Christian unity, in the Eastern churches in general, and in the Russian church in particular manifested in the past twenty-five years, it is rather surprising that we have had to wait so long for a translation of *Russie et l'Eglise universelle*, which Vladimir Solovyev wrote in French and published in Paris in 1889. The work has now been done by Canon Rees, and he has done it excellently: his translation is clear, straightforward and English.

In a lengthy introduction Solovyev states his objects as being to show what Russia needs if her theocratic mission (for so he sees it) is to be fulfilled; to expound the theological and historical basis of the universal unity, the ecclesiastical monarchy, established by Jesus Christ; and to relate the idea of theocracy, the social Trinity, to the theosophic idea, the divine Trinity—'the trinitary principle and its social application'.

It has been said that all later Russian Christian thinkers derive in varying degrees from Vladimir Solovyev. However this may be, there is one aspect of his teaching that these philosophers and theologians agree in rejecting, and that is his recognition of the divine institution and practical necessity of the papal primacy. Nor have many of them been any better pleased by his acute estimate of the Byzantine church and empire in history (e.g. 'Rather than sacrifice its actual paganism, the Byzantine empire attempted in self-justification to pervert the purity of the Christian idea. This compromise between truth and error lies at the heart of all those heresies—often devised by the imperial power and always, except in certain individual instances, favoured by it—which distracted Christendom from the fourth century to the ninth.') His criticism of the Russian church and its relations with contemporary Orthodoxy, in which prominence is given to the evidence of I. S. Aksakov, is long and detailed; and he remarks—as Western observers have since had occasion to do—that in Russian Christianity 'it is the idea of the Universal Church that is lacking on both sides ["official" and "popular"]'.

That 'it is the historic destiny of Russia to provide the Universal Church with the political power which it requires for the salvation and regeneration of Europe and of the world' seems even less imaginable today than when Solovyev wrote; on the other hand, though it has been shaken to its foundations, deprived of its natural

rights, and shorn of its extraneous privileges and prestige the Russian church, even in a measure in its 'official' aspect, has not been 'reduced to powder' by the shocks it has received since 1917. as Solovyev declared it would be in discussing the Metropolitan Philaret's conception of the Church (page 55). And for all his penetrating and outspoken criticism Solovyev himself declares (page 34) that it is 'as a member of the true and venerable Eastern or Graeco-Russian Orthodox church, which does not speak through an anti-canonical synod nor through the employees of the secular power, but through the utterance of her great fathers and doctors. I recognise as supreme judge in matters of religion him who has been recognised as such by St Irenaeus, St Dionysius the Great . . . etc., namely, the apostle Peter, who lives in his successors and who has not heard in vain our Lord's words: "Thou art Peter . . ."'.

*Russia and the Universal Church* is in three parts, each essay complete in itself and the second and third of far wider interest and application than the subject of the title of the whole work. The second, and shortest, part discusses the Petrine and papal primacy, with characteristic reflections on the book of Daniel (especially ii, 31-36) and with special reference to Pope Leo I and the council of Chalcedon. 'It is clear', Solovyev concludes, 'that to reject the supremacy and doctrinal authority of the Roman see as usurped and false involves not merely a charge of usurpation and heresy against a man of the character of St Leo the Great; it means accusing the oecumenical council of Chalcedon of heresy and with it the whole Orthodox church of the fifth century' (page 44).

In Part Three Solovyev starts with a consideration of God as triune,<sup>1</sup> and proceeds in a series of short chapters to examine the signification of the names of the three divine hypostases: the three-fold manifestation of the divine Essence in pure or primordial act, in secondary or manifested action and in perfect self-enjoyment; space, time and mechanical causality as the principle of creation; the cosmogonic process as mechanical unity, dynamic unity and organic unity; 'the incarnate *Sophia* whose central and completely personal manifestation is Jesus Christ, whose feminine complement is the Blessed Virgin, and whose universal extension is the Church'; the messianic attributes of priesthood ('sun'), kingship ('moon') and prophecy ('stars') objectivised in the organic social trinity in order that Christ may have specific organs of his threefold activity; and ends with some splendid pages on the three sacraments of the rights of man (baptism—liberty, confirmation—equality, eucharist—brotherhood) and the four sacraments of man's duties. 'This work of sanctification does not therefore belong only to the priesthood: it demands also the co-operation of the Christian state and of

<sup>1</sup> In default of a copy of the French work, it is not clear whether the title of this chapter is the author's or the translator's. But it is very misleading.

Christian society. What the priest initiates in his mysterious rite, the secular prince must continue by his legislation and the faithful people must consummate in its life' (page 208).

DONALD ATTWATER

BOCCACCIO. By Francis MacManus. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

There are two common methods of presenting the biography of a writer. One is to devote the first part to an account of the man's life, and the second part to an appraisal of his works. The other is to portray the events of his life and his writings in one chronological sequence against the background of his times. In 'Boccaccio', the latest volume in the Writers of the World Series, Francis MacManus has chosen the latter; and it is a wise choice. For this is as much a book about the twilight of the Middle Ages as about Messer Giovanni Boccaccio.

'I must hasten to add', writes Mr MacManus in his *Avvertimento*, 'that it is not a scholar's book because, as any scholar will discern even in the depths of his cups—that is, assuming that cups and scholars still associate—I am no scholar, though I have met some scholars on their way from school. . . . Following their authority and sometimes their example, I have picked brains'. In spite of such diffidence there is evidence of considerable scholarship to be found both in the biography itself and in the appended list of books consulted. But if he means that he has written a book that can be enjoyed with profit by the general reader as well as by the scholar, he is quite right. His prose is vivid, colourful, robust, liberally spiced with humour, and at times even lyrical. The only footnotes are prose translations of the excerpts from Boccaccio's writings with which the book is generously provided. One only wishes that he had placed these immediately after the originals in the text as he did in the case of the verse translations.

The prologue on the circumstances of the exile and death of Dante Alighieri sets the scene for the colourful life of one who was to be his most ardent worshipper and his first biographer. There follow five parts corresponding to the seasons of the year. 'Early Spring' recounts the birth, childhood, and early love affairs of Giovanni. 'High Spring' begins with the Holy Saturday of 1336 in the Franciscan Church of San Lorenzo when he looked up from his prayers and saw 'a most marvellous vision of beauty'. This second part is full of quotations and summaries from the long romantic novels and poems which the languishing lover wrote in an attempt to woo and win the illegitimate daughter of King Robert. Those who are to fling this book aside in wearied boredom will do so somewhere in the middle of 'High Spring'. The climax of 'Summer' is the picture of the Black Death and its effect on medieval Europe and on Boccaccio. Mr MacManus is at his best in 'Autumn' where he skilfully and elegantly describes and appraises the work for which Giovanni Boccaccio is chiefly