

REVIEWS

THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND. By Philip Hughes. Vol. I: The King's Proceedings. (Hollis and Carter; 42s.)

If the truth of Catholicism is presupposed there is ground for argument that only a Catholic, viewing the Church from within, could write a satisfactory history of the Reformation. To do so, however, he must be sufficiently versed in theology to appreciate the new ideologies of the period and their effect on men's lives, and above all be a scholar, abreast of the latest research; over all he must possess a power of sober and balanced judgment, viewing facts objectively and not given, through over-preoccupation with a particular aspect of events, to seeing other aspects only in distorted perspective.

Father Philip Hughes has these qualifications, and his first instalment of Reformation history is a work of importance, written with originality and with a wealth of detailed scholarship which seems to cover every inch of the ground, yet does not impede the sweep of the story he tells or blur its clear-cut outline. It is not possible perhaps fully to assess the first volume until its companion appears, which will deal with the extended results of what Henry VIII began, as they developed in the reigns of his son and two daughters. This volume describes and weighs the King's Proceedings; those proceedings opened the flood-gates of a religious revolution in English life which proved to be greater and more deeply penetrating than anything that a royal despotism could control.

Father Hughes writes with a deep, and at points almost passionately expressed, conviction which will probably be taken in some quarters as an indication of bias; but impartiality is not a cold detachment from judgments of value, but an assessment (as far as is humanly possible) of all the factors in a given situation according to an absolute moral standard. There is a striking restraint in Father Hughes' refusal to draw settled conclusions about many perplexed questions where full evidence is not available. This is specially noticeable in his treatment of the background of social life in the early sixteenth century, with its complexity of changes—economic, political and intellectual—forming the groundwork upon which a powerful Tudor monarch was able to work his will.

Father Hughes' thesis is that, at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, England was, with the exception of some surviving Lollardy and the beginnings of Lutheran infiltration into London and other cities, a country devoutly Catholic with a perhaps, on the whole uninstructed and habitual, attachment to the Faith, combined with a

strong admixture, in places at least, of anti-clericalism. A complexity of causes had converged to make it possible for a powerful and headstrong king, in pursuit of his own personal desires, and with the help of ministers and state servants whose first principle of conduct was to serve their own ends, to establish himself in place of the See of Rome as Head of the Church in England, and in consequence as the fountain head of spiritual jurisdiction and the final arbiter in matters both of doctrine and discipline. All this without greatly altering the ordinary Catholic way of life according to which Englishmen had lived for centuries; a revolution from Catholicism to the most radical Protestantism, which chose however to continue for the time being the main observances of Catholic faith and practice.

The converging causes in the social life of the country which formed the groundwork for such revolutionary action included economic change, bringing with it a new intellectual outlook upon the meaning and purpose of life and a consequent lowering of moral standards; a clergy in the main ill-educated and unable to cope successfully with the work of explicit instruction of their flocks; a hierarchy conspicuously lacking in pastoral zeal because by custom their duties and training were more those of civil servants than of pastors of souls; and finally a monasticism in which the standards of religious observance had greatly declined.

Father Hughes traces with clarity the steps by which the King's Proceedings accomplished this strange revolution. He analyses the King's manoeuvres with the Holy See in the matter of the Divorce and demonstrates that, vacillating as the Pope certainly was, irresolute and shifty, once the nature of Henry's demand was made clear to him by the technical experts, there was no question of that demand being granted—only of attempts to gain time in the hope of some change in circumstances which would make an adverse decision unnecessary. An interesting feature of this study is the description of the propaganda employed by the King and his agents, when the decision was taken to act in the Divorce question in defiance of the Holy See, to discredit the Papal supremacy *jure divino* and to build up and broadcast the doctrine of the Royal Supremacy as scriptural and divinely revealed. This propaganda, based apparently on Marsiglio of Padua's *Defensio Pacis*, was drawn out at its fullest in Stephen Gardiner's *de Vera Obedientia*. This tractate makes the most fantastic claims for the King as head of the Church, transferring, as Father Hughes points out (page 342), 'to a man all the authority which, according to the Catholic tradition, was divinely given not to any man but to the one divinely founded, divinely guided Church that is, mystically, one body with God Himself incarnate. The whole man is now subjected in conscience to another human being,

on obedience to whom, in matters of religious belief also, salvation will turn. What God desires for all Englishmen, it seems, is that they shall be passive instruments under the hand of the King. Whatever the King, as King, ordains, that God will ratify and confirm. Did anyone ever believe this blasphemous rubbish? Did Gardiner, or Cranmer—or Henry himself?’

Father Hughes does not directly answer this question in the present volume, yet the answer to it has an important bearing on the subsequent history of the Church of England. In what sense was this extreme doctrine formative of Anglicanism? Surely neither Gardiner and his fellow traditionalists, nor Cranmer and his party with their very different ideas, really believed it? Gardiner, as his later history seems to show, was a Catholic at heart, and may well have continued to think as a Catholic while making heretical professions with his lips and pen. Fear was the dominant motive, and hope that things would change with a change in the King’s desires and all would be well. A machiavellian attitude to truth was characteristic both of the age and of his own training in diplomacy. Cranmer had long ceased to believe as a Catholic, and when he came to position and power as Archbishop it would seem that fear of consequences combined with an intense desire to introduce Reformed doctrine and practice into the Church of England when opportunity arose, induced him to justify himself on similar machiavellian principles in the leading of a double life, and in the swearing of an oath of spiritual allegiance to the Pope and at the same time in the private reudiation of it before witnesses; (‘that which I did I did by the best learned men’s advice I could get at that time’). Such conduct can be thus explained without being condoned. It was an age in which moral standards were becoming increasingly blurred.

No doubt Cranmer genuinely believed in the Royal Supremacy in some form, but in the extreme form of Henrician propaganda it was quite incompatible with the supremacy of Scripture as the source of God’s revelation, which at a later date emerged as the foundation of the Reformation settlement of which he was the chief architect.

The Henrician doctrine of Royal Supremacy seems to have been seized upon by the King as a powerful instrument to subdue the Catholic Church in this country to his purposes. In the process he cut it off from Catholic unity and made possible its later transformation by Protestant influences. Though a much modified doctrine of Royal Supremacy has remained an integral part of establishment, the symbol of an identity of Church and Nation which the Reformation settlement aimed at bringing about, the Church of England has never accepted the belief that ultimate decisions as to doctrine lie in the power of the Crown.

The publication of the second volume of this history will be awaited with much interest. The recent instruction issued by the Holy Office to local ordinaries on the Ecumenical movement has emphasised that in our approaches to non-Catholics we must beware of adopting a falsely *eirenic* attitude by exaggerating the short-comings of Catholics at the Reformation period (real and terrible though they were) in such a way as to gloss over the errors of the Reformers and distract attention from the crucial point, which was their falling away from the Catholic Faith. *The Reformation in England* will be a valuable corrective of any such tendency.

HENRY ST. JOHN, O.P.

A HISTORY OF THE CRUSADES. Vol. I: The First Crusade. By Steven Runciman. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

JESUITS GO EAST. A Record of Missionary Activity in the East, 1541-1786. By Felix Alfred Plattner. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 16s.)

It is encouraging to find leading historians nowadays launching upon general histories instead of confining themselves to specialised research. Mr Runciman has already given us an excellent specialised study in his *Emperor Romanus Lecapenus*, as well as a general survey of Byzantine civilisation, but here he has taken as his theme, in three not too large volumes, the whole history of the Crusades. The documentation of the Crusading period is, of course, fairly limited as to original sources, but the background to it is enormously complicated. It ranges geographically from the Great Wall of China to Moslem Spain, and includes the interrelations of Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphs, Seldjuks and Byzantines, Copts, Armenians and Orthodox in the East: while in the West there are the conflicting aims of Normans, Provençals and Lorrainers, Venetians, Pisans and the Holy See. Over all this material Mr Runciman moves easily, contriving a most readable narrative and appreciation of the triumphant and disastrous First Crusade.

He gives the fullest explanation possible of how the Crusade came to be preached, and of the success of Urban II in doing so, but it remains mysterious that it should have come about at all. Western civilisation had been at its lowest ebb about the year 1000, and yet, by the end of the century, the backward and menaced community had struck a great blow in a direction opposite to all the dominant trends of history. It had penetrated the East, with its vastly superior civilisation and the huge pressure of its races moving ever westwards. The triumph of the Crusade was that it began that expansion of Western power that led to the effectual European domination of the globe.

The tragedy of the Crusade, Mr Runciman indicates, here agreeing with all modern Crusading historians, is in the blow which it struck at the power of Byzantium in the Middle East. He also has some valuable