

ences, or by their alleged similarity. It may be that many other people have similar dreams or hallucinations in quite ordinary circumstances. The psychological condition and history and the religious background of the patients are also clearly rel-

evant here. To none of these considerations does Hampe allow anything like due weight, and as a result his argument is quite vitiated.

GARETH MOORE O. P.

A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE edited by Hubert Cunliffe-Jones with Benjamin Drewery T. and T. Clark Ltd 1978 pp. x + 601 £11.80

There is something faintly ludicrous in trying to write a book on the history of Christian doctrine. As if Christians ever formed a homogeneous body with a single mind. There are the Creeds of course, but Christians have disagreed about their meaning. And there is also a problem of ignorance: even prospective ordinands have to learn what was going on at Chalcedon. Not that Christians do not agree; and not that their statements always clearly reveal a real conflict of understanding. Perhaps, after all, the mystery in Christianity is the thing that pulls its supporters together in spite of themselves. But to talk of 'Christian doctrine' can still be deceptive. It suggests a peace that may be only linguistic.

Yet it is still useful to have a report of what Christians have said, and herein lies the value of the present volume. Its origins go back a long way, in fact to G. P. Fisher's *History of Christian Doctrine* published in 1896. But it is very different from Fisher's book. For one thing it covers ground ignored by Fisher, the history of Orthodox theology for example. It also contains contributions by several scholars and thereby reflects the impact of growing specialization. Altogether, in fact, the editor has brought together ten authors many of whom are acknowledged authorities in the areas allotted to them. The line up is as follows: G. W. H. Lampe (on patristics), Kallistos Ware (on the Orthodox), David Knowles (on the Middle Ages), E. Gordon Rupp (on Wyclif to Erasmus and on Melancthon and Bucer), Benjamin Drewery (on Martin Luther and Trent), Basil Hall (on Zwingli), T. H. L. Parker (on Calvin), H. F. Woodhouse (on sixteenth-century Anglican theology), R. Buick Knox (on the history of doctrine in the seventeenth-century) and John Kent (on Christian theology in the eighteenth to the twentieth-centuries).

By any standard that is an impressive collection of writers and one must be grateful to have them together in print if not in churchmanship. Inevitably, however, the resulting text has its drawbacks. One is a certain sort of learned superficiality: too many names, too many précis of people's work, too many vague and indigestible bits of information. (Is it, for example, really worth simply being told that "Pietism deeply influenced Johannes Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) whose biblical studies bore fruit in his *Gnomon* (1742) which was a rich mine of information on the text and interpretation of the New Testament" [p. 433]?) Another is an over-concentration on key and/or notorious literary individuals (the makers of theology?) and a corresponding tendency to disregard popular religion (the theology of makers?), political and social influences on ecclesial developments, and the teaching and impact of writers who might be relegated to the area of 'spirituality'. Thus, the text of Aquinas, Luther and Calvin gets fair coverage, but one does not find much about medieval piety and society, sixteenth century nationalism, the fabric of Geneva in 1536, *The Cloud of Unknowing* or Ignatius Loyola. Perhaps such topics do not become the pages of a book on the history of Christian doctrine, but that is debatable. At any rate, if we get a paragraph on John Hick (pp. 589-90) we are surely entitled to one on Walter Hilton or the Rule of Saint Benedict. (One would also welcome a chapter or two on the New Testament.)

But for the price asked one has here a valuable collection for which undergraduate and similar students of theology can be grateful. The only serious competitor covering similar ground is the Pelican History of the Church which works out cheaper and offers more bibliographical material. On the whole it also shows more interest

in Christianity as something that lives in a world where ideas get forged by events as

well as *vice versa*.

BRIAN DAVIES O. P.

CONSIDER YOUR CALL, A THEOLOGY OF MONASTIC LIFE TODAY by Daniel Rees and others. SPCK 1978. pp xx + 447. £10.00

In 1969 the English Benedictines set up a theological commission to study the theological basis of their particular way of life, and this book is the result of their labours, generously made available to a wider public than just English Benedictines, in the belief that the fundamental concerns of monks are christian concerns, not peculiarly monastic, so that all christians can be expected to recognise matters of general interest in this exercise of monastic soul-searching.

In so far as this is a statement of Benedictinism for Benedictines, it would be impertinent for an outsider to offer any comment on it; suffice it to say that I should be very surprised indeed if it does not prove to be a very valuable aid to monastic renewal and – perhaps just as importantly – to monastic continuity.

But in so far as their statement has also been offered to the rest of us, certain observations would seem to be in order. And the first must be that the very lucid and sensible discussion of a whole range of topics cannot but be of value to christians of all walks of life, and particularly to non-Benedictine religious. The authors' comments on poverty, for instance, seem to me to be admirable, avoiding both the temptation of exaggerated spiritualizing and that of an uncritical assumption that the most important element in monastic poverty is its social or political effectiveness. The reflections on celibacy are also excellent, and also the discussion of the relationship between priesthood and monasticism. There are splendid (or, as the printer prefers it, spendid) chapters on personal prayer, *lectio divina*, the divine office and obedience. Sensible things are said about shared prayer, though in my opinion it is rather disingenuous to omit any sustained discussion of the problems it can cause and, seemingly, has caused in some religious communities.

From the point of view of a non-Benedictine reader, the weakest point in the book concerns the question of the relation-

ship between Benedictinism and other modes of christian life. The authors on the one hand seem to take it for granted that Benedictinism represents some kind of norm of monasticism, which all other forms of religious life adapt in various ways, and on the other hand they are anxious not to make exaggerated claims for Benedictinism, which they present as only one vocation among others. But there are problems on both counts. It is historically a very dubious contention that "all types of Christian religious life in the West are in some way developments from the monastic ideal" if by "monastic" is meant "Benedictine". The Dominicans, for instance, though they obviously make use of Benedictine and even more, Cistercian models, far more essentially derive from a very different kind of monastic past, rooted ultimately in the wandering preaching monks associated with Syrian monasticism. Similarly the Franciscans are not really intelligible as an adaptation of Benedictinism. Nor are the Jesuits. If by "monastic" we understand the whole spectrum of ascetic movements in the history of the church (Wanderprediger, Stylites, Antony-type hermits, and so on) then it seems necessary to say that Benedictinism is only one species within the genus 'religious life'. Maybe for Benedictines it is self-evident that a return to the sources means essentially a return to the Rule of St Benedict; but if Benedictinism is taken to be more essentially monastic than Benedictine, then the possibility of monasticism without a Rule has to be faced. It would have been interesting and helpful if the authors of this book had done more to specify positively the advantages of having a Rule, and to relate the resulting spirituality to other possibilities. It is at least conceivable that part of the monastic renewal going on now derives more from pre-Benedictine sources than from Benedictine, and it would be helpful to see how the Benedictines would relate to it. In so far as their tradition is in real continuity with