

REVIEWS

THE ROMAN PRIMACY. By B. J. Kidd, D.D. (S.P.C.K.; 5/-)

This temperate statement of Dr. Kidd's views on the divine institution of the Papacy marks another stage in the return of English Church scholarship to the traditional faith of the Church of England.

Readers of BLACKFRIARS need no reminding that the present, somewhat uncertain, attitude of the Established Church towards the Church of Rome means two things: firstly it means the denial of ten centuries of its history; secondly it means the denial of the most glorious page in the history of the Church of England. We take it that this Church never did anything more heroic than when in the reign of Elizabeth its entire Hierarchy, with one exception, refused to change their traditional faith in the Supremacy of the See of Rome for the Supremacy of the Crown of England. This heroic episode in the history of the Church of Augustine and Theodore and Wilfred and Anselm and A'Becket is hardly dimmed by the fact that under bribe of preferment or threat of poverty there were found some English clerics of less than heroic stature.

We have called this book a *statement of Dr. Kidd's views*. We feel sure that Dr. Kidd will understand and perhaps sympathize with our uncertainty about what are or are not the views of the Church of England on this or on any point of faith.

As to Dr. Kidd's views, *The Church Times*, which represents, at least, one section, or sub-section, of English Church doctrine, writes:

Dr. Kidd claims that the primacy assigned to Rome in ancient practice, though less than a primacy of jurisdiction, was more than a primacy of honour. It allowed a real initiative to the Pope. Dr. Kidd would call it a primacy of leadership.¹

Where *we think he concedes too much* is in his insistence that the influence of Rome was as much apostolic as it was geographical. (*Church Times*, December, 1936.)

Dr. Kidd, on reading the printed page of what he has written, may regret that he has vicariously offended his own canons of good scholarship and good manners by a quotation from Puller: "There is nothing more absolutely certain in the history of the Church than that the papal jurisdiction outside the suburb-vicarian provinces mainly arose out of the legislation of the State. *Erastianism begat it; and forgery developed it.*"² On reading these words we are grateful that they are a quotation; and that they are so out of literary fellowship with Dr. Kidd's *ipsissima verba*. But Dr. Kidd's residence in a university atmosphere may

¹ Dr. Kidd explicitly calls it "a primacy of leadership" (p. 155).

² Page 128—quoting F. W. Puller's *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome* (p. 176).

BLACKFRIARS

suggest that such a wild general statement, if presented to a college tutor, would have met its fate by a blue-pencilling.

Seldom does a book of controversy contain, as Dr. Kidd's book contains, in its first sentence the ultimate ground of its unhistorical conclusion. The opening words of this book are: "The Roman Primacy means the authority enjoyed at first by the local Church of Rome and then by its Bishop. . . . At first the primacy was that of the local Roman Church. It had an acknowledged pre-eminence among other churches" (p. 11).

Although the Church of England has no other unity of head except the Crown, but still retains Pope Gregory's organization into two Provinces of Canterbury and York, yet Dr. Kidd might see in the organization of either of these Provinces the refutation of his own refutation of the Papal claims. Let Dr. Kidd substitute Canterbury or York for Roman, in order to give an historical and indeed a logical meaning to his words:

"The Canterbury primacy, in the Province of Canterbury, means the authority enjoyed by the local church of Canterbury and then by its Archbishop."

We will ask one question if only to reassure ourselves that discussion offers any hopes: Was it Canterbury that empowered Augustine; or was it Augustine that empowered Canterbury?"

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

BIOGRAPHY

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: G. K. Chesterton. (Burns Oates; 10/6.)

Those who were most in the life of the writer of this autobiography cannot help recalling words and acts of his that argued a consciousness of coming death. But even the casual reader will feel that its completion on the eve of death was an "undesigned coincidence" that argued the unconscious, if not the conscious, fulfilment of a work before the night came when no man could work.

Though here and there we seem to see death marking its approach by a trace of weariness, the writer of *The Everlasting Man* and the singer of *The Ballad of the White Horse* has left his sign-manual of philosopher and poet on every page. Not a few of these pages in their perfect craftsmanship of remembrance show their writer to have a genius for friendship. Indeed the chapter fitly entitled *Portrait of a Friend* recalls, not Boswell's sincere and bulky praise of Johnson, but Cowley's no less sincere but more finely phrased panegyric of Crawshaw.

If the writer ever had or thought he had an enemy, he has found no place for him in the long litany of men he met and of "those old friends from whom I have been sundered in thought