

THE LEGACY OF LUTHER. E. W. Zeeden. (Hollis and Carter; 25s.)

The Professor of Modern History at the University of Freiburg-in-Breisgau has given us an interesting and valuable study from Lutheran sources of the changing attitude of Lutherans to their founder during three vital centuries. So impressive has been the authority of Luther for most German Protestantism that it might be truthfully said that Luther means to a Lutheran exactly what Christianity means to him. As his understanding of Christianity has varied, his picture of Luther has changed with it. Luther stood for a principle and a doctrine. The principle was that of the freedom of the individual conscience from the authority of the Church. The doctrine was justification by faith alone. Whenever and wherever Lutherans have turned against dogmatic Christianity, they have seen Luther, with his *principle*, as exclusively the champion of freedom. Where they have retained their understanding of Christianity as a revelation, Luther, with his *doctrine*, has been the champion of God's word. For the first group, Catholicism and Papacy has stood for a wrong principle, that of tyranny and narrow dogmatism. For the second group, it has stood for the false doctrine of merit and good works.

Professor Zeeden traces the history of Lutheranism up to the time of Goethe from the aspect of the Luther-ideal. In the earliest period following the Reformation, Luther was a divinely sent figure, the pastor, father and teacher. If Catholics attacked his human character, Lutherans turned attention to his prophetic status. They saw him as sent to destroy the power of Antichrist, i.e. the influence of the papacy; and to preach the true original Gospel, which had become obscured and corrupted in the Middle Ages.

In the eighteenth century, interest in dogma declined in favour of either pietism or rationalism. Yet, pietists and rationalists though most Lutherans were, they still claimed to be genuine followers of Luther. Where the earlier Lutherans had seen Luther as a champion of true doctrine, their eighteenth-century followers saw him as a human personality, and the great champion of freedom. He it was who freed man's conscience from the yoke of the medieval Church and papacy. The essential thing was his vindication of the freedom, not only of individuals, but also of nations. So Luther came to be looked upon as the defender of religious individualism and national religious independence.

The paradox of these developments was that Lutherans were so naturally invoking Luther in support of every type of naturalism and rationalism, that the religion of some of his followers at this time could hardly justifiably even claim the title of Christian. 'For eighteenth-century rationalists, the Reformation meant that major turning-point

in history when the domination of prejudice, error, ignorance, and religious coercion was overcome through the victorious advance of reason, independent criticism, "truth" (as they repeated indefatigably), and tolerance; when political, economical and spiritual servitude ceased and freedom began for conscience and state.'

We are able to follow in this volume the many ways in which the authority of Luther was quoted in support of the most secular and naturalist corruptions of Christianity. But the tradition of orthodox Lutheranism, we see in this same volume, was never entirely lost, though often without illustrious supporters. At all times there have been those who saw in Luther the defender and proclaimer of true doctrine, and who saw in Lutheranism true doctrinal Christianity. The opposition between these rival forms of Lutheranism is really greater than that between orthodox Protestantism and Catholicism. In this respect, the situation of continental Protestantism in relation to Catholicism is not unlike that prevailing in England during Newman's time. Newman, whether before or after his conversion, regarded doctrinal Liberalism as the real danger for Christianity. As a Catholic, he did not regard good Protestants as a potential danger in the sense in which the doctrinal liberals who denied revelation were, whether in the Church of England or elsewhere.

Professor Zeeden's book will have value from an ecumenical point of view, if only it helps orthodox Protestants and Catholics to realize that, with all the differences in their view of the Church, they both stand for the eternal values and truth of God's word in a world in which the characteristic religion is this-worldly, individualist or nationalistic. On the other hand, from a Catholic point of view, he seems to confirm historically the impossibility of unity in the preservation of Christian revelation without belief in the guidance of the Holy Spirit through a visible Church.

Professor Zeeden has also published a volume of texts from Lutheran sources, illustrating each phase of the development of thought he describes. This volume has not been translated; so we are left with the professor's own account, together with occasional short quotations; but we have enough here to gain a bird's-eye view of the vital changes in Lutheranism for three centuries after its founder's death.

H. FRANCIS DAVIS

THE INSTITUTIONS OF PRIMITIVE SOCIETY. (Basil Blackwell; 7s. 6d.)

This series of talks was originally given in the Third Programme under the title of 'The Values of Primitive Society'; two of them, Professor Evans-Pritchard's and Dr Lienhardt's, have already appeared in print in BLACKFRIARS. The talks are intended to serve as an intro-