

criticism. We do not of course believe that any special answers to intricate problems and difficult questions can be extracted from the many volumes which Orme has reprinted, or the forgotten folios which are now seldom opened by the most curious readers. But the temper and tone of much of Baxter's writing, in spite of the querulous and captious spirit which often disfigure his pages, is the temper and tone which we often look for in modern writing, and look, alas! in vain.

G. D. BOYLE.



Reviews.



The New Religio Medici. By FREDERICK ROBINSON, M.D. Elliot Stock. 1887.

THE "Religio Medici" of Sir Thomas Brown is a book that never loses its charm. We read and we re-read it, and each fresh perusal affords us fresh pleasure and instruction. A convincing proof of the high estimation in which it is held is the fact that some thirty-four imitations of it are said to have been written. The last of these (if it be designed for an imitation) is "The New Religio Medici" of Dr. Robinson now under review. It is a very different book from that of "The Good Old Knight of Norwich," who, by the way, was neither old nor a knight when he wrote his famous work. Its author does not, when taking up his pen, cut himself adrift from "fixity of belief" and sail away into a sea of speculation, trusting to his learning, his logic, and the soundness of his principles to bring him safely into the haven of right faith again. He lets us know at the outset that it is on the basis of scriptural truth that he takes his stand, and from this secure position he surveys the topics upon which his book expatiates. He is not of those who regard the Bible as merely "a record of the best thoughts of the human race." To him the sacred book is the revealed word of God, the only safe and sure guide vouchsafed to man in matters spiritual.

Under the heading "Universalism through the flesh" Dr. Robinson combats the somewhat fanciful views of Hinton in reference to "the mystery of pain," sweeping away with a few words of practical sense some philosophic cobwebs with which that charming writer has obscured the subject. After quoting Hinton's rhapsody about the "pleasurable efforts," "rejoicing gifts," and "glad activities" which "the utter losses and unfathomable miseries" of a life of pain afford, he adds: "Speak to some poor woman affected with a terribly painful disorder in this exalted language, and what would the words convey to her? Almost travesty; certainly unreality." Pain, he tells us, "has a logic of its own"; suffering men "regard but two objects," "the Divine will and bodily relief," and he points out that "devout men of old—David, Job, Hezekiah—when under pain from sickness, assuredly weighed no impersonal consideration."

The chapter which deals with the undue length and "vain repetition" of our Sunday services expresses thoughts which doubtless have often occupied the minds of many who will read this book, although few have the courage to publish them. We live in an unsettled age, and from a

sense of insecurity and apprehension of impending evil good and earnest men, zealous for the truth, suppress many thoughts in religion, morals, and even politics which, if openly and fully discussed, might benefit mankind. The advance of thought and suggestions of change are too much left to those who, untrammelled by considerations of Church or party, are apt in their speculations to wander beyond the line which divides honest doubt from hurtful scepticism, and in practical religion to advocate startling changes. Dr. Robinson is a safer and more sober adviser, and many of his suggestions are well worthy of serious consideration. Perhaps he takes too unfavourable a view of the Church of England services, and does not sufficiently consider the great improvements which have been made within the last twenty-five years. He has an evident leaning towards the Puritan view of life and to Puritan simplicity of worship. Yet, if the Church does not, by means of her public services, attract the mass of "the lower orders," neither does the chapel. And our Nonconformist brethren have no agency for this purpose at all comparable in point of efficiency with the Sunday and week-day services held in the Mission rooms which are now so numerous in our larger towns.

In the article on "The Church and the Army" the reader will find much information in small compass respecting the means employed to provide for the spiritual needs of our soldiers. The voluntary aid of educated laymen is advocated as tending "to supply a link between the commissioned chaplain and the Army Scripture-reader. Fitted by education and position, such a layman could take the place of the former in emergencies, help him at times in functions (which, indeed, already devolve not unfrequently on isolated laymen abroad), and further religion, especially among the officers."

The essay on "Biblical Plague and Pestilence" examines the meaning of these significant words of Holy Writ, and in what instances we may understand by them intensified forms of ordinary disease. Referring to the decimation of Sennacherib's host, the author writes: "Anyone who has witnessed the most virulent type of Asiatic cholera can never forget that which is comprised in the word 'collapse.' The fabled Medusa appears in human shape and in terrible reality—a state, too, not necessarily preluded by cognisable evidence of suffering. It is, indeed, a veritable simoom blast, shrivelling up and silently destroying life in briefest moment of time. Thus may have flashed forth the sword of the Avenging Angel, and so may have fallen the stroke of death."

Appended to the work is the diary of "a Puritan lady," Elizabeth Gill, born in 1677, daughter of the Rev. Joseph Gill, an independent minister, and herself afterwards the wife of Mr. Lazonby, a minister. It is a record of the doubts, temptations, and general experience of a religious and devout mind, expressed in language the simplicity of which makes it quaint to our modern eyes. The views of original sin which were common with the people amongst whom this lady was brought up had a strong effect upon her mind, and tinged with melancholy the happiest periods and circumstances of her existence. Of her "little lad" she writes:

Though he's a pleasant, comfortable child, yet I cannot but look upon him with sorrow; and even my bowels are troubled for and yearn towards him when I consider him as polluted with original sin—that root of bitterness that can bear no better fruit than the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah. It is with a most tender, affecting thought I look upon him, so dear to his parents, yet by nature at a distance from God—at enmity with Him, and heir of hell.

Dr. Robinson's book, it may be added, is pleasant to read.

THOMAS CHAPLIN, M.D.

"A Layman," not aware that Professor Stokes's "Ireland and the Celtic Church" was reviewed in *THE CHURCHMAN* as soon as it was issued, has favoured us with a long review of the book. As Canon Moore's review was, unavoidably, very brief, we gladly insert the main portion of our correspondent's, as follows :

We believe that the work of Professor Stokes will supply a real want in our literature ; for the history of Ireland is not only "a very chequered story," it is one about which many even well-informed persons know very little, and ignorance in this direction, as in others, has prompted many a false judgment, while it may have strengthened many a prejudice. But it may be objected that the failure of many otherwise educated persons to master Irish history is in part the fault of the historians themselves, who, despite their learning, have not always made the subject as light or entertaining as must be the case if those are to be attracted who read for pleasure as well as for profit. Though given as lectures before a University audience, the prelections of Professor Stokes constitute what, in a sense, may be called a popular work ; that is to say, the salient facts of the first centuries of Irish ecclesiastical history are given in a sufficiently succinct and readable form. While scholars will prize the book, we can well believe that many who rank as general readers will find in it a guide to the knowledge of a subject which has too often, with some show of reason, been regarded as repellent because dry and difficult. The author does not profess to have produced a complete work ; he says what many students know to be true from painful experience—"exhaustive histories are sometimes very exhaustive to their readers ;" the chief characters who stand out on the canvas are those grand old evangelists, Patrick, Columba, and Columbanus, with some others, who in their different spheres were Apostle-like in their zealous Gospel labours.

The beginning of the Celtic Church takes us back to the Apostolic age ; for, as Professor Stokes reminds us, the Galatians themselves were Celts ;¹ and the Gallic Church having been also Celtic, there were martyrs in France who suffered for their faith long before the light of the Gospel reached the shores of England. The distinction between Saxon and British Christianity, of course, needs to be constantly borne in mind. The Christianity of the Saxons dates from Augustine, and was derived from Rome. "British Christianity was the Christianity of the Britons ; it existed here for ages before Augustine, and must have been derived immediately from Gaul." People usually think, says Dr. Stokes, "that pagan darkness covered England and Ireland alike till St. Patrick came in the fifth century and converted Ireland, which enjoyed the light of the Gospel for a century and a half before England, where it did not penetrate till the beginning of the seventh century."

In taking account of the comparatively rapid diffusion of the Gospel in the earliest times, we should remember that the Government organization of the Roman world before the downfall of the Empire showed a far more advanced state of things than obtained in later days. Thus the public roads, which afterwards became the greatest hindrance to travellers, were then so perfect that one "could leave Ctesiphon, or Babylon, in Mesopotamia, or the city of Nicomedia in Asia Minor, as Constantine the Great once did, and never draw rein till the public conveyance set him down at Boulogne, on the shores of the English Channel." Highways which thus extended from one extremity of the known world to another, of course greatly facilitated commerce, and the ceaseless traffic that was ever going on between Rome, the centre, and the most distant colonies

¹ See Bishop Lightfoot's "Epistle to the Galatians ;" First Dissertation.

naturally resulted in the diffusion of knowledge, and more particularly such as pertained to a knowledge of the Cross of Christ. Then, at a very early date, there were Christian officers and soldiers in the Roman legions, and these in a way became evangelists at the outposts where they happened to be stationed. Indeed, by an apt illustration, Professor Stokes shows how effectively Christian pioneer work may be accomplished by soldiers :

The British army is still an active agent in disseminating the various tides of home opinion throughout our world-wide empire. The Evangelical, the Tractarian, the Rationalistic movements have all found devoted and powerful missionaries in the British army. Perhaps the most notable example in modern Church history that occurs to me is the foundation of Methodism in the United States. One hundred and twenty years ago communication between England and America was much slower and more dangerous than between Rome and London in the reign of the Antonines. Yet within thirty years of the foundation of the Methodist Society by John Wesley, a few soldiers in a marching regiment founded a Methodist Society at New York about the year 1765, which has grown so rapidly as to have now become the most powerful and numerous religious community in America. Can one imagine that the religious zeal of the Christians of the second century glowed with a less fervent flame than that of Wesley's disciples in the eighteenth ?

The early part of the fourth century was characterized by a severe outbreak of persecution. The wonderful faith and heroism of those who forfeited their lives had the inevitable effect of stimulating others to accept the Gospel, so that when the storm passed away the Church found itself to be growing in strength. British bishops were frequently found at foreign councils. There are abundant signs of the activity that prevailed. "The British Church, indeed, of this period proved its interest in theological questions by the most vigorous and satisfactory of proofs," says Professor Stokes. "It produced a heretic. Pelagius, the founder of the Pelagian heresy, and the antagonist of Augustine, is said to have been a Welshman, whose British name was Morgan." By the close of the fourth century, it appears, the British Celts were all by profession Christians.

The question, When did the Gospel enter Ireland ? is a question not to be answered with certainty ; although from what has been already said about the comparatively easy and rapid intercommunication of the earlier centuries, we may conclude with Professor Stokes that the Gospel was at all events known to individual Irish natives before the preaching of St. Patrick commenced in the early part of the fifth century. The bosom friend of Pelagius was Coelestius, an Irishman.

Although so little is known about him, the personage whom we recognise as Succath, or St. Patrick, is one of the most interesting figures in British and Irish ecclesiastical history. Born in or about the year 396, and coming of a patrician family, Patrick had the misfortune to be made a prisoner, as may be supposed, in 411, when the Picts made one of their plundering raids into the Roman province south of the wall of Severus ; and having been sold as a slave, he became a swineherd in Ireland. In a valley near the hill Slemish, County Antrim, the captive youth passed six years in this servitude ; and then, after he contrived to escape, his only desire was to prepare himself to preach the Gospel, and to return to Ireland as a missionary of the Cross.

Patrick's "Confession" contained in the "Book of Armagh," a "Life of the Saint" included in the same collection, and his "Epistle" addressed to Coroticus of Wales, are the chief sources whence the facts for a biography have to be drawn. They are, as Professor Stokes insists, "the only documents on which an historical critic can rely." It is reassuring and strengthening to Christian faith to find that the nearer we

approach the Apostolic age the more transparent are the marks of honesty which historical documents bear, corruption and disingenuous trifling having been a gradual process. Hence, "in studying acts of martyrs and saints one universal lesson of criticism is this, the more genuine and primitive the document the more simple and natural, and, above all, the less miraculous; the later the document the more of legend and miracle is introduced." The mediæval monks, as may fairly be conceded, were not altogether devoid of conscience; but being over-zealous for the honour of their order, they allowed their imagination too much license while appealing to their illiterate constituents. Could St. Patrick have seen the portrayals of himself which were intended to be so flattering and so impressive, he would not have recognised the likeness; and, what was more, his early religious associations on the banks of the Clyde and later experiences in Ireland were quite out of keeping with the Romish sacerdotalism which made gradual advances after his day. While he himself knew nothing of the miraculous as associated with his own actions, the circumstances of his birth show that the celibacy of the clergy was then not recognised in Britain. It was not, indeed, to be recognised for some hundreds of years. The following is a picture of social and public life in the fourth century which may enable the reader the better to understand the condition of that older world in which the Apostle of Ireland was prepared for his life-work:

St. Patrick's father was a *decurion* or town councillor. How, then, was he ordained? The reply is simple enough. In his capacity of *decurion* he did not act as a magistrate at all. In colonies like Dumbarton the only magistrates were *ædiles* and *duumvirs*. The *decurions*, however, in council assembled controlled the whole social and municipal life of the place; instituted and regulated the games, managed the water supply, the public buildings, local taxes, and education. In addition to his public employments his father *Calpurnius* was also a farmer, and possessed a country house, from which St. Patrick was carried captive. This union of spiritual and of secular offices—*decurion*, cleric, farmer—was by no means uncommon during the earlier ages of the Church. It was, in fact, only about the opening of the third century that the clerical office became a profession separate from secular cares or employments.

Referring to this passage in his early life, Patrick himself remarks in his "Confession": "I was taken captive when I was sixteen years of age. I knew not the true God, and I was brought captive to Ireland with many thousand men as we deserved, for we had forsaken God and had not kept His commandments, and were disobedient to our priests, who admonished us for our salvation."

We seem as though we could see this youthful Christian once more among his own kindred after his return from captivity, a sure evidence of the change that had come over him having been his solicitude for the salvation of his pagan taskmasters. The cry of the perishing Irish rang in his ears, and he resolved to go and preach to them the Gospel. Was he commissioned to undertake this service by *Cœlestine*, Bishop of Rome? It is extremely unlikely that this was the case, for *Cœlestine* was then only one among many bishops who possessed no superior authority.

When we attempt to follow St. Patrick to Tara, the centre, and thence through one province after another of Ireland on his great mission, it is difficult to separate legend from fact; but on the whole he stands out as a singularly laborious and self-sacrificing man, who found in the work, to which he believed God had called him, the choicest satisfaction that earth could yield. His aim was invariably to work upon the hearts of the chiefs in the first instance, feeling that if they were won their followers would naturally follow.

If the Apostle of Ireland was a Scotchman, the founder of the

Primitive Church of the highlands and islands of Scotland was completely Irish, both as regards his birth and education. When Columba was born in the year 521, the name of St. Patrick was already a fragrant memory, for the churches and theological schools which abounded bore striking testimony to the extent and permanent character of his work. Of princely lineage, and educated at Clonard, Columba was well equipped for his future evangelistic enterprise among the savage pagan Picts. Probably few tourists who in these days visit the village on the Boyne in any way realize what was the importance of the place in ancient times :

Clonard does not now retain many vestiges of its ancient ecclesiastical splendour ; but till the thirteenth century it was one of the most famous sees of Ireland. One fact alone shows this : it was pillaged no less than twelve times, five of them by those persistent robbers, the Danes. The church and adjoining buildings were fourteen times consumed by fire, which doubtless must often have happened, since they were usually constructed of timber. Thus we read that in 1045 the town of Clonard, together with its churches, was wholly consumed, being thrice set on fire within one week. But neither the Danes nor fire were the worst enemies of Clonard. Domestic faction helped to lay it low. Thus in 1136 we read that "the inhabitants of Breffury plundered and sacked Clonard, and behaved in so shameless a manner as to strip O'Daly, then chief poet of Ireland, even to his skin, and leave him in that situation ; and amongst other outrages they sacrilegiously took from the vestry of this abbey a sword which had belonged to St. Finnian, the founder. The library was burned in 1143. The monastery and scholastic buildings stood on the western bank of the Boyne, the present church and churchyard occupying a part of the site. The modern church was built out of the materials of the ancient abbey, and contains a splendid fort, one of the few remains of Clonard's former grandeur.

Such was the greatest of the Irish theological schools at which, "in the days of its primeval glory," Columba received his training, the Church then being, as Professor Stokes says, "intensely monastic in all its arrangements." In such stormy times it was almost necessary that the brethren should become gregarious ; but their mode of life and Church order must have differed in many important particulars from the Romish monasticism of later ages. At all events, if we judge the tree by its fruits, the school in which the future apostle of Caledonia was trained was a good one ; for before finally leaving his native land, he seems to have developed into the most zealous evangelist of his time, the Churches he founded having numbered some three hundred. The first forty years of his life were spent in Ireland ; the latter half in Scotland. Christian work in those days was somewhat different warfare from what it is at present. "Christianity, indeed, had spread itself through Ireland," it is said, "but it was as yet only a thin veneer over the Celtic nature, rash, hot, passionate, revengeful. It had, indeed, conquered some of the grosser vices, and made them disgraceful. It had elevated somewhat the tone of morals, but it had scarce touched the fiery, unforgiving spirit which lay deep beneath, and still exhibits itself in the fierce and prolonged faction-fights of Limerick and Tipperary." Of Columba's work in Iona our author gives a most interesting account.

Columbanus, a native of Leinster, was born in the year 543, belonging to the same century of Missionary fervour as Columba. He was the apostle of Burgundy, Switzerland, and Northern Italy ; a trained and elegant scholar, a Missionary of abounding zeal and deep devotion. As to the ecclesiastical position of Columbanus, Professor Stokes's remarks are judicious. We read :

It has been a great crux for Ultramontanes. In Columba's life there is not one trace of the Pope or the slightest acknowledgment of his claims. There is silence, however, and this is at most only a negative argument. In the "Life of Colum-

banus" there is many a mention of the Pope and several epistles to Popes, but there is also an express rejection and denial of their claims, and a use of plain language to them which no Irish priest of the Roman obedience would now dare to use.

The space which Professor Stokes devotes to "Ireland and the East," and "The Round Towers of Ireland," shows that he has thoroughly studied two branches of inquiry which have sorely perplexed many preceding students. Irish ecclesiastical history has so often been studied through the spectacles of prejudice that it is reassuring to come across a teacher who strives to be honestly impartial. It may be quite true that the ancient Irish evangelists would not be regarded by us as exemplary Protestants, but at the same time it is quite certain that they knew nothing of many of the tenets distinguishing Romanism which were rejected at the Reformation. If they represented a branch of the Western Church, the Paschal controversy and some other matters show how widely they differed from the Roman communion in many important matters of discipline; and not until centuries after Patrick's death did these Celtic Christians yield to what has been called "a different and more advanced Church organization," but which may really have been a falling away from the purer primitive standard. It is also said that "there is no evidence that the Pelagian heresy found an entrance there, and least of all is there the slightest foundation for the supposition that it (*i.e.*, the Irish) had any connection with the Eastern Church."¹ Professor Stokes is so far from endorsing this latter notion that he says there are "some peculiarities of Irish monasticism which can only be explained by a reference to Syrian ideas and customs." Even in the days of St. Patrick the churches in the West were not isolated from those in the far East; there was constant inter-communication, and it was nothing but natural if Oriental customs and practices were introduced into Occidental states. While Irish monasticism differed in many essential particulars from the Western discipline of St. Benedict, the Anchorites who were found among its monks manifestly represented an institution directly imported from the East.

The Round Towers, about which so many conflicting opinions have been given, will probably be found to point inquirers in the same direction for an explanation of their origin. Professor Stokes accepts, in the main, the views of Dr. Petrie as given in "The Christian Architecture of Ireland anterior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion."

Dr. Petrie's general conclusions, substantially adopted by every subsequent inquirer, about the Round Towers are these: (1) That the Round Towers are of Christian and ecclesiastical origin, and were erected at various periods between the fifth and thirteenth centuries. (2) That they were designed to answer at least a twofold use, namely, to serve (*a*) as belfries, and (*b*) as keeps, or places of strength, in which the sacred utensils, books, relics, and other valuables were deposited, and into which the ecclesiastics to whom they belonged could retire for security in case of sudden predatory attack. (3) That they were probably also used, when occasion required, as beacons and watch-towers.

After showing that the towers prove too great a knowledge of the principles of architecture to have been the work of the ancient pagan inhabitants of Ireland, and that the earliest Christian churches were towerless, Dr. Stokes asks, "Whence, then, came the invention of church towers and steeples?" adding his belief that they came "from Syria, the very same quarter whence come many other peculiarities of our early Celtic Church." At the expense of Napoleon III., Count de Vogué prepared his great work "Central Syria: its Architecture, Civil and

¹ "Encyclopædia Britannica," ninth edition, article "Ireland."

Religious, from the First to the Seventh Century;" and he there describes a district unknown to the generality of scholars, and visited by very few adventurous travellers, but which is said to be "one of the richest districts of the world in ancient monuments of every kind." Here is De Voguë's own description of what must once have been a paradise of architecture:

Central Syria is the region which extends from north to south, from the frontiers of Asia Minor to those of Arabia Petrea, bounded on the east by the great Mesopotamian desert, and on the west by the rivers Jordan, Leontes, and Orontes. In this region we find a series of deserted cities almost intact, the sight of which transports the traveller back into the midst of a lost civilization, and reveals to him all its secrets. In traversing those deserted streets, those abandoned courts, those porticoes where the vine twines round mutilated columns, we receive an impression like that received at Pompeii, less complete, indeed, but more novel, for the civilization which we contemplate is less known than that of the age of Augustus. The buildings date from the first to the seventh century, and all seem to have been abandoned, as it were on one day, upon the Saracen invasion, about A.D. 700. We there are transported into the very midst of the Christian Church of that time. We see its life, not the hidden life of the Catacombs, timid, suffering, but a life opulent, artistic, spent in splendid houses with galleries and balconies, in beautiful gardens covered with vines. There we see wine-presses, magnificent churches, adorned with columns, flanked with towers, surrounded with splendid tombs.

In the days of Patrick and Columba the fair but unwooded region thus described was one of the world's chief seats of art and learning; and in successive stages, as it were, its architecture is traced to Constantinople, to Ravenna—a decayed city, still interesting on account of its buildings—and thence to Ireland. This seems to be a reasonable explanation of the origin of the Round Towers, "a type of architecture," as Professor Stokes remarks, "so exactly suited to the troublous times of the Danish invasion."

The chapters on the "Paschal Controversy" and the "Social Life of the Eighth Century" open up fields of inquiry which are but little known to the majority of readers, but which offer rich returns to the diligent student. The picture of daily life in the Green Isle 1,100 years ago, when "the wars and quarrels between the various kings and tribes were simply interminable," is a very forbidding one; but while the laws were loosely administered, or were not administered at all, learning and many arts flourished and progressed after a manner that is to ourselves not a little surprising. As seats of learning where Greek, Hebrew, and patristic literature were studied, the old Irish colleges can hardly have been second to any others in the world, but the time had come when the Bishop of Rome was widening his pretensions and consolidating his power over the universal Church. It was only little by little, however, that an elaborately organized Romanism gained ascendancy over the ancient and once independent Celtic Church; but when all this was effected Rome had reached the height of her power and splendour in what has not inaptly been regarded as the midnight of the world. Did space permit we might refer to the exploits of the old Irish hero Brian Boru, and to the last armed conflict with paganism in Ireland; and to the interesting associations of the sees of Armagh and Dublin. The subject is one to which English people ought to give more attention; and in the hands of Professor Stokes the annals of Old Ireland become invested with all the interest of a romance in real life.

A LAYMAN.