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## **A Church History: The Christian Centuries**

Review Article: John N. Schumacher

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And while Father de la Costa has included a chapter on the Moslems, he failed to include selections on the other cultural minorities. Again, selections having a bearing on arts, letters and sciences, their origins and development and the Filipino leaders in these fields, are also omitted. Misspelled words (*pracitces*, *peculaiton*, *thier*, *acitve*, among many others) suggest better proofreading for future editions, and mar an otherwise neat and attractive printing job. Yet all these should not detract from the importance of this work.

I fully endorse this book which could serve as an effective basic text for colleges; I must also hasten to add that Father de la Costa's inimitable way of presenting the selections has made reading it an enlightening and pleasant experience.

MARCELINO A. FORONDA, JR.

## A CHURCH HISTORY

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES: I: THE FIRST SIX HUNDRED YEARS. By Jean Daniélou and Henri Marrou. Translated by Vincent Cronin. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964, xxx, 522 pp.

One of the most important factors in the theological renewal of mid-twentieth century Catholicism has been the great advances made in the historical study of the Church and of the evolution of Christian dogma. The importance of these studies for modern theological thought is only rivalled by the similar and related advances in biblical studies. So rapid and so radical has been the revision of Catholic historical scholarship that in many areas, most notably the field of early church history, all our scholarly comprehensive church histories are already out of date. The monumental series *Histoire de l'Eglise*, begun under the editorship of Augustin Fliche and Victor Martin some thirty years ago, has not yet reached completion, and already there is much in its early volumes which is dated. Moreover, though the Fliche-Martin series remains an indispensable work for the church historian, it is primarily intended for the specialist, and its projected twenty-six volumes are far beyond the ordinarily well-educated reader. No doubt it is for this reason that the English translation has never progressed beyond the first few volumes.

To fill the need of a church history embodying the results of modern historical investigation in a form which meets the needs and interests of the non-specialist educated reader, an international group of outstanding scholars, under the general editorship of Professor

Louis Rogier of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, Canon Roger Aubert of the Catholic University of Louvain, and Dom David Knowles, emeritus Regius Professor of Cambridge University, has proposed a five-volume work, "providing the mature scholar and the beginning student with competent and up-to-date syntheses of the Church's growth and development from Pentecost to Vatican Council II." This series is being published by an international consortium of publishers, and is to appear simultaneously in French, English, German, and Dutch.

The first volume has as its authors Father Jean Daniélou, S.J., who treats the first three centuries, and Professor Henri Marrou, who brings the story up to the end of the sixth century. Daniélou's account emphasizes the welter of different currents of thought, stemming from the various currents of Judaism, which co-existed in the primitive Church. It was a very gradual process by which the Apostolic Church came to understand her own unique nature and to work out under the guidance of the Spirit the implications of the life and preaching of Jesus. To those accustomed to the picture of an essentially ahistorical Church, determined and outlined in detail by Christ to his Apostles, the idea of the Church only gradually coming to an understanding, for example, of the role of bishops as successors of the Apostles, and of a higher authority in the person of the Bishop of Rome, a notion which took centuries to reach its full evolution, may seem strange, even unorthodox. But it was precisely because Christ's revelation was not merely a dead set of propositions to be handed on, but a living thing in His Church made up of men, that the divine had gradually to evolve in human forms through the men who made up the Church. Amid the variety of doctrines which grew up around the Message in Judaeo-Christian sectors of the Church, or in the speculations of Gnosticism and Hellenistic philosophy, the essential Message of Christ gradually distinguishes itself more and more clearly through the growing prominence of the hierarchy acting as bearers of the Apostolic tradition. The history traced by Daniélou is much more than a mere account of events, persons, and opinions. With his profound knowledge of ancient Christian literature, as well as of Gnostic and other heterodox currents, and a creative and imaginative use of the resources of history and archeology, he attempts, with great success, to re-create for us the living Church in every aspect of her daily life.

The only criticism which might be made of Daniélou is that in certain areas in which he holds a special competence, such as Gnosticism, his treatment occasionally goes beyond the depth of the ordinary educated reader. On occasion, too, it might be difficult for the non-specialist to be aware that the interpretations given by Daniélou, authorized as they are by his recognized competence, are

not always the only ones accepted by scholars. This is particularly true of his conception of a peculiar Judaeo-Christian theology.

Less adventurous perhaps than Daniélou in his interpretations, and dealing with a period for which we have much more extensive sources and greater knowledge, Marrou is no less successful. His explanations of the complicated Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries are as lucid and enlightening as they are accurate. The descriptions of the developing Christian liturgy and the pictures of Christian life and spirituality are no less vivid and solidly based in modern historical research.

The usefulness of the entire volume is much enhanced in its English edition by the numerous maps and judiciously chosen illustrations, each of the latter accompanied by helpful explanations of their significance for the understanding of the early Church. They are eloquent testimony to the insight into the life of the early centuries given us by archeological research.

It is a pity in such an excellent work of scholarship and one so splendidly presented, to have to refer to the large number of misprints and some clumsy translations, particularly in the frequent use of French forms for proper names of Latin or Greek origin. Nonetheless, these faults of editing and translation cannot seriously detract from the value of this fine book. It can only be hoped—with confidence, considering the competence of the other authors—that the same high standard of scholarship and readability will be maintained in the succeeding volumes of this series.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

## ROUALT: A 'HISTORY'

GEORGES ROUALT'S MISERERE. By Frank and Dorothy Getlein, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company. 1964 ix, 149 pp.

To the stranger or the neophyte, much of Georges Roualt's art may seem incomprehensible, even repelling. And certainly to those whose likes run to the delicate and gently luminous impressionism of a Monet, a Degas, or to the clarity of a Casatt, it is possible to run away from a Roualt because it is "harsh," "bizarre," or just too bold and too dark. (Precisely my initial reactions.) Yet it is hard to remain indifferent. And to an amateur, such as I am, an intelligent explanation (if it is at all truly possible to "explain" an artist to a layman) of Roualt's work could lead to the development of sympathy if not outright liking for it.