

Book Reviews.

THE WAY OF AT-ONE-MENT. STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

By W. J. Phythian-Adams, D.D. pp. 125. 7/6 net. S.C.M. Press.

Whatever may be said in criticism of this interesting book, it cannot be denied that it springs from a passionate desire to see the attainment of unity amongst the Churches of Christendom. The work is pervaded by a large charity and an intense desire to see the healing of the wounds of the Church. The writer starts from ground common both to the reformed Churches of Europe and ourselves in Holy Scripture. Of the Bible, Dr. Phythian-Adams reveals, as we should expect, a profound knowledge, and the basis of his thesis might almost be said to be what he describes as the "Providential unity of the Bible". It is his first great point and for it he uses a word certainly not very familiar to most people—"homology" by which he means "that there is between two things not a mere resemblance but a real and vital—in this case, an (economic)—correspondence". In other words we must not regard the Old Testament as merely a Biblical repository for interesting analogies but as evidence of the continuing power and goodness of God begun in Old Testament times and continued in New Testament times.

It is quite impossible for us to follow the Author through the book and observe his use of this principle which, in some ways of course is not particularly original. It is certainly in his application of his theories that most people will be interested though hardly in agreement with the writer. Of course he has much to say both about the Bible and history which is extremely interesting but not always very convincing. A very good example of this is given on page 92 where he emphasizes the distinction between the preaching of the Gospel by those who had been "from the beginning . . . eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word and all later preachers." "Here," as he says, "the preaching of the Gospel was not the mere delivering of a message which, when the person of the messenger is a matter of indifference, is a purely instrumental function. It was rather of the essence of this preaching that the Apostles had personal knowledge of the Person whom they preached. . . ." He then proceeds to contrast this with the activities of the settled ministry of the Post-Apostolic Church. "Here the ministry of the Word . . . has virtually become an instrumental function." And to this he adds an interesting interpretation of a familiar expression. The very term "pure Word of God" "is enough," he says, "to prove this. 'Pure' in this context means that the Word preached is quite uncontaminated by the personal views and prejudices of the preacher" . . . Thus we have on the 'Protestant' side a perfect instrumental parallel to the 'Catholic' view of the ministry of the Sacraments". This is certainly an aspect of the matter that deserves consideration.

Earlier in the book, Dr. Phythian-Adams brings out another aspect of what must be called controversial theology. "Having lost the Biblical principle of *homology* according to which our Lord fulfilled and superseded the whole system of Atonement prescribed under the old Covenant. . . ." "the Church has forgotten that it is Israel." This, in his opinion, has had disastrous results in history. The great reformers were "strong institutionalists", but having lost contact with this Biblical conception through, presumably, the necessity of stressing the doctrine of salvation through faith, "the voice of the Church as a people ceases to have much significance, and ultimately its form and even its visible unity becomes a matter of little account. That is why, for all the good that it has done, the Reformation has stopped short of final victory. It has recovered the true meaning of faith and grace but it has never caught sight again of Israel."

The writer goes on to develop this theme in a way which in many respects will carry most readers with him. For example on p. 57 he writes, "In a word two things, not *one*, are seen to be necessary for us men and for our salvation. We must be remade, reborn, redeemed, justified (call it what you will), by repentance and faith as individuals. . . . But we must find salvation together as *members of a community*; and the living principle of that community, its spirit, the law of its being, must be love."

The final outcome of all this reflection is seen in a number of suggestions for

reunion which, to say the least, will inevitably involve a host of practical difficulties. He deals with the two Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion in what can only be called a novel fashion. The same can certainly be said of his treatment of Episcopacy which "rightly understood is the only possible form of government for the Church of Christ." And in an extremely interesting way, which we must leave the reader to discover for himself, he proceeds to demonstrate the truth of this thesis. The principle, it must be emphasised, is love. "As no Christian lives for himself without ceasing to be a Christian, so no Congregation can long be worthy of its calling if it looks to its own things and not to the things of others. Love must move ever outwards, that is the law of its being." Whether his idea of Episcopacy in the reunited Church of the future or his idea of a Diocese will ever be acceptable remains to be seen. If "No Diocese should be so large that a single Bishop cannot lay his own hands on those who are to receive Baptism with 'Holy Spirit'" one wonders where all those qualified for the office of a Bishop are to come from!

Anyhow, the book deserves to be read and studied as a fresh and arresting contribution to the immense problem of re-union, and should form the basis for much valuable discussion from what is certainly a new point of view. C.J.O.

THE WORD AS TRUTH. A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REVELATION IN THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS AQUINAS AND KARL BARTH.

By Alan Fairweather. 10/6 net. pp. xvi + 148. The Lutterworth Press.

If any student is looking for a really stiff bit of theological reading he will find it in this work. We say this at once because no one should be deluded into believing that this is a suitable book for arm-chair reading by a busy preacher. On the contrary the author gives us a book which demands and should receive very serious thought and consideration. It naturally pre-supposes some acquaintance with the writings of Karl Barth and in a somewhat lesser degree with those of Thomas Aquinas. Both these great men in widely different ways have exercised a profound influence on Christian thought and are still determining factors in modern theology. Most readers will be probably more interested in what the Author of this book has to say about the theology of Karl Barth than that of Aquinas because far more non-Romans are probably acquainted with the writings of the former than the latter though there has been a revival of interest in Thomist theology in certain Anglican circles fairly recently.

The main Barthian position which is challenged by this book is stated at the very beginning: "Barth's whole view supposes that God cannot speak to man without first negating the effects of sin, whereas the emphatic witness of both Testaments is that he addresses man in his sinful state. The worldly form of His Work is the only form then adequate to His purpose." For "the point at issue in regard to revelation through history is whether historical events play any part in expressing a divine meaning". Orthodox theology would certainly maintain that they do and it is certainly true that "the Old Testament provides overwhelming evidence that God's motive is understood through historical events and their circumstances." Hence the difficulty of agreeing with Barth when he writes: "In no way is historical event and historical value of any kind to be identified with divine event and divine value. The movements of history, even the greatest and the best, must not be identified with the movements of the Spirit of God."

The further Barthian contention that "God cannot speak to man in his sin" is also open to very obvious objections from the normal Christian standpoint. "Cannot God speak helpfully and savingly to man in his sin while he still remains in it? The revelation of both Testaments forcibly proclaims that this is precisely what God does". Christianity is a revelation to sinful man in history. Against this view, Barthian theology, at all events as represented by Karl Barth himself, rejects the idea that the facts of history can reveal eternal truth. The Author's full discussion of this attitude is well worth studying. This is particularly true when he is dealing with such aspects of Barth's teaching as his attitude to sin. Barth has almost an obsession about sin, regarding it as a barrier between God and man of such a nature as to preclude that necessary contact between the all holy God and the miserable sinner. But surely the Author is right when he says that "The sin of man, far from being an unfit medium for revelation, is the only medium which permits that God should come to sin, as sin requires He should. . . . For, as he goes on to say, "Sin is not only a defiance of God, but the defiance of

God who forgives it. To forget this would be to miss its worst iniquity. God is not only the Forgiver, but the Forgiver of the sin which defies Him. To forget this would be to miss the greatness of His grace."

We have in this book a critical examination of the teaching of two great thinkers. Space has compelled us to limit our attention to what he has to say concerning that Teacher who has had so profound an effect upon non-Roman theology in recent years. In many ways this influence has been beneficial, but in any final and adequate appraisal of Barthian theology, its inevitable limitations must also be taken into account and this is precisely what this work enables us to do.

C. J. O.

A GREAT TIME TO BE ALIVE.

By H. E. Fosdick. S.C.M. Press. (235pp. Price 8/6 net.)

This is the latest—but not, we hope, the last—volume of sermons by one whom a competent American contemporary has described as probably the greatest preaching voice in modern Christendom. The sub-title of the book describes it as a collection of "sermons on Christianity in wartime", and we learn from the preface that with one exception they have been preached since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, and that that one exception was, in fact, "preached on the Sunday morning of that fateful day". "All these sermons, therefore, have this present war as their background; and they have been selected because, in one way or another, they deal with the problems, personal and public, that the war presents."

In temper and outlook these sermons are not essentially different from those which Dr. Fosdick has already published and, beginning on what may seem a negative note, let it be admitted that they are somewhat deficient in dogmatic content so far as the preaching of the Gospel is concerned. By this we mean that their witness to the revealing and redeeming Word of God in Christ is less than wholly Catholic, in the true sense of that often abused word. Or, to put it a little more fairly, the purely doctrinal note is sounded less frequently, and less clearly than is required of the New Testament evangelist. That, however, does not mean that Dr. Fosdick fails to summon men to take Jesus Christ seriously. Indeed, his sermons continually hold what he describes in one of them as "a plea for loyal self-commitment to Christ and what He stands for," and nothing is more persistent in them than the quality of dynamic challenge. And now and again he comes nearer to the kind of direct witness and assertion which the times demand and which we would like to have more often in his message. So we gladly put on record his forthright statement that "If Jesus is only our ideal, then we are of all men most miserable, but if He is our savior, too, then the doors of hope begin to open".

It is written in the New Testament that the ascended Christ "gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers". Dr. Fosdick's place is with the prophets, and, in the opinion of your reviewer, it is a place which is both established and pre-eminent. These sermons, in common with all his preaching, reveal those particular qualities which authenticate the prophet. For one thing, they come to closest grips with vital and immediate issues—issues such as war and peace, and the spiritual bankruptcy, frustration and ineffectiveness which mark and condemn so much of conventional Christianity. Closely akin to this is his capacity for far-sighted, incisive, and impartial judgment. Every one of us is made to look spiritual realities squarely in the face, and acknowledge just what they mean for ourselves. A hundred quotations would serve to illustrate and emphasise this quality in his preaching: here is one selected almost at random. "Hitler is the incarnation of everything I fear and despise most, in national and international life. The Christian church's message involves no soft mitigation of judgment on so appalling an exhibition of antichrist. But the distinctive message of the Christian church does insist on the realistic fact that all of us nations together helped to make Hitler possible; that by what we did not do and by what we did we helped to produce him and the opportunity he used; that nazism is the horrid boil in which the base infections of the world have come to a head, and that if the world is to be really cured of its evil, all of us, acknowledging a common guilt, must by God's grace seek amendment together". That is something which we need to be told, and which we shall need to remember in the difficult years before us. And it is in direct spiritual succession to the word of the Lord as, long centuries ago, it came, for example,

through Amos.

Enough has been said about the content of this modern prophet's message. There may well be added a word about his style,—and manner is hardly less important than matter. It is direct and pungent, free from artificiality and false pietism, and always "on the popular wave-length", in the very best sense of such a phrase. Dr. Fosdick always speaks in a tongue "understood" of the common people, and he is a sheer master of relevant and varied illustration. A close study of half a dozen of his sermons might well form part of a theological college course in homiletics,—which suggestion we courteously leave with those whom it chiefly concerns!

T. W. ISHERWOOD.

TREASURES OF DARKNESS.

By "Nicodemus". James Clarke and Co., Ltd. 5/-.

The author who adopts the above pen-name has written this book as the sequel to another, entitled "Midnight Hour". It consists mainly of a series of meditations on the lessons in the Revised Lectionary from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day (it is rather strange to find the day *after* Ash Wednesday described as "First Day in Lent"!) But there is also an introductory essay on "The Search of Scripture after the Spirit", in which the author enlarges upon his aim in these meditations, as expressed in a sentence in the Preface, where he describes the Bible as "a Book which will remain sealed for the merely intellectual approach typical of our time," but adds that "opened by Spirit", here are "wells of light and power able to give to our Christianity the dynamic which it lacks."

This is, in general, well said. But what, exactly, is the meaning of "opened by Spirit"—particularly in view of these other words (on p. 13)—"a total surrender of spirit to the rule and guidance of a Spirit of God"? Why "a Spirit of God"?—especially as, immediately following, is the phrase "a constant looking and listening for the Spirit that 'giveth life'." This is perhaps the first example in the book of a feature noted elsewhere, when what appears to be clear statements are followed by others which leave one wondering whether the author is after all intending them to be taken in their plain and full sense. This may be partly due to his fondness for pointing out paradoxes; but in some cases things may be entirely incompatible (we shall have to return to what seems to be such a case presently).

The author's method of approach in his Biblical meditations has both its merits and its demerits. We shall all agree with the importance of a spiritual approach, penetrating, by divine grace, so far as may be to the heart of the divine revelation. We shall all acknowledge the profundity of thought in many of these chapters; and very welcome are the author's outspoken and uncompromising declarations on the humility with which that revelation must be accepted. He is at his best in his scathing exposures of the modern attitude in this matter, and in his eloquent exposition of the stern requirements of Christian discipleship, and his timely warnings against the softness of some prevailing representations regarding it. Here are two examples—"Our soft pseudo-Christianities may reduce the Love of God to spineless sentimentality and Sunday syrup; the Bible never does." Again, "There is, in the Bible, a conspicuous absence of all signs of the cosy, matey intimacy with God which certain forms of modern religiosity affect." This is a matter to which our author has done well to call attention: the question remains whether his book maintains a quite balanced line of teaching in regard to it, or whether, in reaction from any such softness, he has not, in general, struck too sombre a note with regard to the implications of the Christian life. It is clear that he is alive to the danger, for he knows how to lead up to the thought of Christian joy, and the closing paragraphs of the Book are emphatic as to Easter joy and power. But such references, on the whole, are slight by comparison. Possibly the fact that these are *Lenten* meditations may partly account for the impression referred to. And the title of the book is perhaps intended to indicate that experiences of darkness are mainly in view. But readers may feel that it does not sufficiently reckon with the joyful outlook of the New Testament—and indeed of the Bible taken as a whole.

Some striking analogies with the experiences of the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings are a prominent feature in several of the meditations. The tone is primarily devotional and mystical, and the practical side of Christianity is more prominent than the doctrinal. A somewhat slighting allusion to "the formulas of Chalcedon" may indicate the bent of the author's mind. But he is perfectly clear on the Incarnation, and there are welcome references to other great doctrinal

matters; for example, a strong passage on the Resurrection of the Body. References to the Atonement are perplexing: this is the point to which it was said we would return. Some of them seem quite clearly to declare the shed blood of the Lamb of God to be the only means of salvation. But what is the meaning of these sentences?—"Only by the shedding of our own life-blood can we cleanse the defiled holiness of our being; only with the blood of God can the holy Being of the Life of all the worlds be redeemed. There, in that Holy of Holies, the blood of God mingles with the blood of man and the striving of man for the truth is met by the agony of Him who is both man and God". Yet, in the closing meditation, for Easter Day, we read of its message as "primarily a Redemption, a deed done, not by us, but for us, in which we can but 'stand still and see the salvation of the Lord'; and reference is made to "the inveterate Pelagianism of the human (and especially the British) heart"; and it is declared that "the Word of a Biblical Earth is not 'strive' but 'yield'".

The book is certainly not published for financial profit: it is quite startling in these days to find a volume of this extent offered at so low a price. There is something unique and attractive about its vigorous style, though it cannot be said that as a whole it makes easy reading, and the author has an occasional habit of breaking out with words not generally familiar. But some of the most effective portions are clear enough, and forcible enough. Here is a very topical extract, drawing a lesson from the ten plagues which were necessary to soften the hardness of Pharaoh's heart. "How many has it taken, will it take, to soften our own hard hearts—or England's heart to-day? Was Dunkirk the first plague? Is it the last? Did not we too say—'We have sinned this time'—and then forget our sin? Will Europe, like Egypt, need ten plagues ere she set free the enslaved spirit of man?" And then, immediately, the personal reminder that we may easily burke the issue for ourselves. "It is self-soothing to think in terms of 'Man' and world-history. But the drama of Egypt (and Europe), so the Bible insists, is also the drama of Everyman. 'Of thee the tale is told'. To you, gentle reader, this Word is spoken".

One or two references indicate that the author holds the doctrine of universal salvation, and there is a strange allusion to "pre-natal memories". We must demur also to the assertion that "the doctrine of extreme Protestantism" is that "the individual mind can sit in judgment upon the Word of God"—unless the reference is to extreme "liberal" Protestantism, of which indeed it may be true. The author's own outlook upon the Bible is that the mind of the Christian must be used to search for "the Word within the word", and (one regrets to find him saying) "to clear away the debris". How this differs from "sitting in judgment upon the Word of God" (an attitude which he verbally repudiates), it may be hard for many to see. He tries to evade the difficulty by a reference to the Spirit illuminating and leading the whole understanding. But (for one thing) who can be certain of not mistaking his own judgment for the voice of the Spirit? And such an attitude ignores the fact that there *was* One whose judgment was unclouded and impeccable, and that He held a very different estimate of Holy Writ from that which is recommended by our author and by some others.

W. S. HOOTON.

A PORTRAIT OF JESUS. A TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATION OF CHRIST.

By Sherwood Eddy. George Allen and Unwin. 7/6.

Many who view with apprehension the critical approach to the Gospels and the Gospel story, wonder how much or how little the critics leave us of the historic Christ. This book is the answer of a modernist, who reverently and with scrupulous fairness has attempted to set before us the result of much thought and learning, and of a spiritual experience of the power of the living Christ that in his view matters supremely. He is of the opinion that in our understanding of "the historic figure of Jesus" we owe more to Schweitzer than to any other man of our generation, though he does not follow him entirely in his eschatology, and the list of authors to whom he is indebted shews how widely he has read. Moffatt was himself known and consulted, and his translation is followed, not always very happily, throughout.

It is significant that Dr. Eddy begins where the Gospels of Mark and John begin, with "the historic fact of the Baptism of Jesus by John", though even this appears to be open to question in the author's mind. This was "the beginning of the good news". From this point we are given brief studies on the

Temptation, the ministry in Galilee, the Great Question, the crisis in Jerusalem, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. To these are added chapters on the Gospel of Paul, the Interpretation of John and the Twentieth Century Portrait.

The general impression left upon the reader is that this is a helpful contribution to this greatest of all subjects, and gathers up many of the results of modern scholarship into a carefully drawn 'portrait' of our Lord "in the days of His flesh." It is obvious that, where compression is a necessity, the treatment of many sections must be slight and inadequate, and is apt to raise a good many queries that are not answered. Yet there are few of whatever school of opinion who will not gain from a study of this book suggestive lines of thought and some fresh aspects of the ministry and message of Christ. If, as Burkitt is quoted as writing, "to make a Portrait of Christ, each man for himself, is the duty of every Christian", this book should be amongst those that are consulted, if consulted in its turn critically, as the Portrait formed in the heart and mind of one whose life of Christian service and witness is widely known.

If we ask, does this Interpretation satisfy? many will be obliged to answer that it leaves much to be filled in, something, it may be, to be corrected. All will value the insistence upon "the Christ of faith", and the Twentieth Century answer to the question "Who say ye that I am?" surely the most urgent question of our day. But with that sense of gratitude will be mingled some disappointment and perplexity, inevitable perhaps in the Modernist approach to Christ. Your reviewer has noted amongst other points of possible difficulty these by way of illustration: the tendency to separate, even if only for thought, the historic Jesus and the transcendent Christ; the ignoring of the accounts of the birth of our Lord and of the doctrine of the Virgin birth; the rejection of the authenticity of many passages as likely to have been inserted later; a "mistaken" eschatology in Matthew corrected by the Fourth Gospel; the explaining away of some of the miracles; St. Paul's "strong aversion to the Greek *logos*"; the reference to the "cumbersome, artificial theory of two natures in Christ" as adopted at Chalcedon, and the emphasis on the divinity as apparently distinguished from the deity of our Lord.

It is, however, the author's purpose to be positive and constructive, and his interpretation is not without its strong Evangelical aspect. He ends by bringing his reader face to face with the challenge of the living Lord. "Unwilling or indifferent, evasive or procrastinating, blind or cowardly, or like Peter following 'afar off', I must do something with Jesus Christ. In the end I must either crucify or crown Him." This, after all, is the alternative before our own and every generation, and, as he says, "no postponement, no evasion, no compromise" is ultimately possible in that choice. S. NOWELL-ROSTRON.

WORLD CHURCH.

By John Foster. S.C.M. 6/-.

Christians everywhere are beginning to awake to the fact that the Church to-day is a world Church. This is, as Dr. Temple so often used to remind us, the great new fact of our time. The story of how the Church has been planted in every part of the world is a thrilling and a fascinating one. In this book Professor Foster unfolds something of that story, and makes it alive and vivid by the use of many telling illustrations, new and old. He writes of the Church as one, universal, militant, triumphant, and central in history.

Professor Foster rightly emphasises that Christianity is not simply an echo of something that happened long ago in the distant past. It tells of God's saving purpose in Christ. It tells of a living Christ, whose promise is "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". In His Church Christ carries on His saving work. "... the Church," writes Professor Foster, "is and always must be the Church at work in a sinful world. It can never expect ideal conditions, and dare not wait for them. Having it at the heart of our Gospel that the Son of God came down from heaven, we take our stand in the midst, accept the shame of our associations, and by our central presence begin forthwith to redeem them." O.R.C.

MANY CREEDS: ONE CROSS.

By Christopher E. Storrs. S.C.M. Press. 6/-.

This book is a shortened version of the Moorhouse Lectures delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, in November, 1943. The Author is Archdeacon of Northam, Western Australia.

Those who desire to know something about the great World Religions will find a mass of valuable information in each chapter. Millions of people are nurtured in the Creeds which are examined in these Lectures. The influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and the philosophy of Confucius upon vast numbers of the human race is deep seated and widespread.

The Lectures throw much light upon the history and development of each of these systems of religious thought.

Shinto and Mystical Nationalism account for much in the mental outlook of the Japanese. It is most interesting to note the similarities and differences between these creeds. But, in contrast with the Cross, there is something lacking in each and all of them. This is brought out very clearly, and a valuable piece of constructive Christian evidence is furnished by the comparison of the various creeds with that which is centred in the Cross. H.D.

PROPHECY AND THE CHURCH.

By Oswald T. Allis, Ph.D., D.D. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.* \$2.50.

There are very many books on prophecy, but very few of abiding value; hence our welcome to this volume of Dr. Allis, who is known over here by his connection with our contemporary "The Evangelical Quarterly".

A graduate of Princeton and Berlin, the Old Testament is his chief study, and we are indebted to him for the contribution he is making to conservative scholarship.

Few will challenge the popularity of dispensational teaching nowadays, and its dissemination through the widespread use of the Schofield Bible. It is to this theory that the writer turns his attention, and shows how it involves a distinct and radically different system of Bible interpretation from that hitherto held in the Reformed Churches. This latter may be called the "typical" or "higher plane" method of interpretation, seen at its best in the Epistle to the Hebrews: the "dispensation" may be called the "horizontal" method of interpreting Scripture. According to it the Kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament enter the New Testament absolutely unchanged; they were made to Israel the nation, and they must be fulfilled literally to Israel the nation. Two very important inferences follow: (1) that the New Testament Church is a mystery parenthesis unknown to the Old Testament prophets: and (2) that the rapture of the Church will be followed by the restoration of Judaism. The "Church age" is thus the result of the rejection of the Kingdom by Israel; and the Cross, in which that rejection found its expression, the foundation on which the Church rests. The Gospel of the Cross is pre-eminently the Gospel for the Church age. After the "any moment" rapture of the Church, the Kingdom will be restored to Israel. In the Kingdom age the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile will be erected anew, and it will remain, world without end.

It is this dispensational scheme of things which Dr. Allis examines in a manner which will yield satisfaction to every lover of the Bible. After defining his terms, and showing the important principles of dispensational interpretation, the writer then turns to the Biblical doctrines of the Kingdom and the Church. This is an extremely able exposition. He then proceeds to discuss the Biblical doctrine of the Coming of the Lord, together with the question of the future of Israel.

Not only is the style lucid and the argument clear, but the value of the book is further enhanced by excellent notes which are well documented, and thorough indexes. W.J.S.

INTRODUCING THE NEW TESTAMENT.

By A. M. Hunter. S.C.M. Press. 6/- 121pp.

In this small book the author sets out "to present the New Testament in the light of modern scholarship". This he succeeds in doing in a very readable way, compressing a good deal of information into small compass, interspersing it with apt anecdotes, and suggestive phrases of his own, as for instance, when he entitles the final epistle to the Corinthians "The Church of God in Vanity Fair".

In the opening chapter the primary reason for the study of the New Testament is found, not in the beauty of its literary style nor in its lofty teaching, nor even in what it has to say about God, but because it brings "Good News from God", telling how Christ came to save sinful men. This chapter with one on Language, Text and Canon, and a synopsis of what is to follow compose the first part. The second is devoted to the Gospels; the third to the Pauline Epistles, Romans,

1 Corinthians, Philemon and Philippians each having special treatment; and the fourth part to Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 1 John and the Apocalypse.

The standpoint of the author is that of the moderately critical school, and fairly represents the average of the teaching now being given in most colleges. The bibliography at the end mentions scarcely any books by conservative authors.

It is satisfactory to find the main articles of the Christian faith accepted, the atonement emphasised and Paul's epistles faithfully expounded. It is not so satisfactory to be told that whilst Matthew was the author of "Q", it is "incredible" that he could have written the Gospel, and that the miracles peculiar to it may be "safely discarded" as the least satisfactory part of the synoptic gospels (p. 46). The Gospel and Epistles of John are attributed to that shadowy person "John the Presbyter", who owes his very existence to the doubtful interpretation of a single sentence of Papias; yet Dr. Hunter clings to the idea that John the Apostle was the authority behind them. The treatment of the Apocalypse is still less satisfactory.

Whilst these instances show that the critical view is taken throughout, the style is markedly reverent, and the chapters on the individual books will help the student to grasp their substance and essential message. The printing is good, but the price seems high for so slight a volume.

G. T. MANLEY.

THE UNREST IN RELIGION

By Erasmian. pp. 128. London: *George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.* 1944. 6/-.

This book deals with what is called the Unrest in Religion, but it does nothing to allay that unrest. We find in it scores of statements which raise difficulties and doubts, but hardly anything which makes belief in divine truth more easy to an enquiring mind. Moreover, one feels inclined to ask the writer whether he recognises that there is such a thing as "the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the Saints" (Jude 3, R.V.) and also whether he considers it to be wrong on the part of the Church through the ages to express the great doctrines of that Faith in a static formula such as the Nicene Creed. We have always regarded the Faith as a sacred "deposit", to be contended for earnestly, and to be handed on unimpaired to succeeding generations. "Erasmian", however, thinks otherwise, apparently, and would have the dogmatic statements reduced to the very thinnest dimensions.

The writer describes himself as "a lay member of the Church of England". In his introduction he states that "certain questions have long troubled his generation, and to-day are stirring young minds to revolt." To revolt against what? The Church's traditional teaching as enshrined and expressed in the Creeds of Christendom. But this is no new thing. In some form or other we find something like it in all periods of the history of the Christian Church. Were not the Creeds themselves to a large extent compiled for the purpose, to say the least, of correcting prevalent misconceptions concerning the Person and Work of our Lord?

"Erasmian" claims that the "fame" of the established Church is as high as ever. He acknowledges that we are heirs of a wonderful tradition. But the fame and the tradition seem to be of little value if the Scriptures and the Creeds are to be as little trusted as the writer would have us believe. A complaint is made that "the right of laymen to ask for explanations of these ancient creeds is not always admitted." But has it not been from apostolic times the privilege and duty of the Christian believer to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason concerning the hope that is in him with meekness and fear? We do not recollect a single instance ourselves of refusal of the right of enquiry.

It is manifestly impossible in a brief review to deal with the many questions and problems raised in this book. Suffice it to say that there is hardly a single doctrine of our Faith which is unassailed or, at least, questioned.

The aim of the book is summed up in the closing words expressing the hope that the simple creed of the old prophet might suffice to answer many questionings and to bring comfort in dark hours to souls in travail—"What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Quite so; but the New Testament links up all this with the work of Jesus Christ for the individual soul and particularly with His full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of men offered on the Cross of Calvary. This book, as far as we can see, leaves out all reference to the awfulness and guilt of sin, and it is therefore not surprising to find no reference to the Atonement.

We cannot think that this book will really help anyone to that repose of faith which ought to be the possession of every believer.

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