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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Among Some Recent Books

The appearance of the new American translation of the Old Testament has been eagerly awaited ever since the publication of the New Testament in the Revised Standard Version. The completion of *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*¹ which was published in September, 1952, marks an important stage in the history of Bible translation. In producing a new version of the Old Testament, scholars are faced with textual problems which differ from those encountered by the New Testament translator. The 19th century Old Testament revisers considered that their textual problems were simpler than those of their New Testament colleagues, since they 'thought it most prudent to adopt the Massoretic Text as the basis of their work.' Their 20th century successors have been more realistic in their approach, and have made free use of the ancient versions to remedy the defects of the traditional Hebrew text, and have even made conjectural emendations unsupported by the versions. Thus in the book of Hosea alone they have departed from the present Hebrew text in more than sixty places, so making a far more intelligible translation than their predecessors. The versions have been followed with profit in such passages as I Sam. xiv : 41 ; I Kings viii : 12, where the RV does not include the improved text in the margin. The translators have accepted the familiar conjecture ('plough the sea') in Amos vi : 12 and the proper names in the following verse, along with 'Ashima' in viii : 14. They have been candid enough to admit that some figures must have dropped out from I Sam. xiii : 1 instead of following the compromise in the RV. In addition to those involving a change in the text, many welcome innovations appear in the translation, though these appear for the most part to be based on earlier researches, which may in this way be given a wider publicity. (e.g. Micah ii : 6 ; Jonah ii : 6 and Jer. x : 5—'their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field.') In many places the translators have accepted the readings which the earlier revisers put in their margin, though in places they appear to have been over-cautious. The language has been modernized, so that archaic verbal forms have been abandoned, and the 2nd person singular pronoun is only used when God is addressed. The poetical passages in the prophetic books are set out in verse form, an improvement on the limited use of that form in the RV. Those who are accustomed to the RV with marginal references will regret the lack of all but a small selection of these in the present revision. But it is difficult for the Biblical translator to please everybody. On the one hand there are those who will complain that the translators have not been radical

¹ Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd. 30s.

enough in their departures from the RV, while there are others who will criticize them for failing to support the AV to which they are accustomed. (There has already been some unjustified criticism of the use of the expression 'young woman' instead of 'virgin' in Is. vii: 14). But we have good reason to be grateful for what we are offered here, and those engaged in Bible translation or revision in this country are certain to be helped by using the Revised Standard Version.

*Myth in the New Testament*¹ is the seventh volume in the series entitled 'Studies in Biblical Theology.' In the preface the author, Professor Ian Henderson of Glasgow University, states that 'the aim of this small book is to introduce English-speaking readers to a controversy which has already proved fruitful in German theology.' The controversy to which he is referring is that between Bultmann, the Christian existentialist, and his opponents who cannot agree with his policy of 'de-mythologizing' Christianity. It has arisen out of the problem of communication, which faces the Church here no less than in the West;—how is it possible to make a 1st century gospel intelligible to 20th Century man? In confronting men with the Gospel, must it still be wrapped up in a primitive mythology which was not, in the first place, specifically Christian? Perhaps our natural answer to this question is No. But if we try to eliminate the mythological, what happens to the historicity of the Gospel? Where are we to draw the line between what we retain and what we reject? Bultmann considers that the elimination of the mythological element by Liberalism was a wrong approach, and that its interpretation in terms of a decision concerning one's existence is the true solution. That is to say, man has basically the same need now as in the 1st century, and what God has done in Christ, He has done for all, however differently they may interpret that achievement. Hence the Cross is both a historical event and at the same time an 'eschatological' event, that is to say, an event of decisive importance for each one of us *now*. For the historical to have this significance, the mythological is not essential,—it cannot make a man decide for or against Christ. 'Since the mythological does not prove the eschatological nature of the historical event of Christ, there is no point in retaining it.' But that raises the question why we should make an ultimate decision for or against a completely 'demythologized' Christ rather than any other human figure. Bultmann's opponents claim that we cannot avoid using 'myth,' however hard we try,—all we can do is to substitute one form for another. Are we not impoverishing our religious thought by trying to detach it from the vivid language of mythology in the interest of historical accuracy? This book raises many such questions, and should provoke some fruitful discussion. It is to be hoped that the reading of this short volume may stimulate some Indian theologian to pursue Bultmann's discussion further, with a view to performing a like service for the Church in this country, as she faces the problem of the communication of the Gospel in a cultural setting unlike that to which Bultmann addresses himself.

The eighth volume in the same series, *God Who Acts*,² also touches on the subject of de-mythologizing the Gospel, and the author, Professor

¹ S. C. M. Press. 7s.

² S. C. M. Press. 8s.

G. E. Wright of Chicago, here criticizes Bultmann for laying such stress on individual decision that he underestimates the meaning of history. 'In order to present the proclamation of the Lord of history we can only use the Biblical myths; there is no other way of communicating Biblical truth.' It is, in fact, 'proclamation' which is the subject of this book, in which it is maintained that 'Biblical theology is the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God in a particular history, because history is the chief medium of revelation.' The growing interest in Biblical theology is a feature of Christian thought which has made itself felt in this country, and this book is an excellent introduction to the subject. It is significant that the sub-title of the book is 'Biblical Theology as Recital', although the author is more concerned with the Old Testament than with the New, as may be seen from a glance at the index of Biblical references. This is because he is pleading for a recognition of the organic unity of the whole Bible, in place of the present tendency to look upon the New Testament and Psalms as 'the real Christian canon'. In maintaining his point of view, Dr. Wright makes some outstanding pronouncements, which will meet with opposition from those who look upon the Old Testament as simply one among many records of the human search for God which has been fulfilled in Christ. The God revealed in the Old Testament 'destroys the whole basis of pagan religion.' In fact, the Old and New Testaments stand together as a unique revelation of God in action, over against all other religions, which fail to take history seriously. The Israelite view of nature and history is not something for which we can give a naturalistic or evolutionary explanation. 'It is the one primary, irreducible datum of Biblical theology, without antecedents in the environment whence it might have evolved.' The nearest attempt we can make at an explanation of it is in terms of the Exodus experience. Just as we have come to realize the basic importance of the early *kerygma* for an understanding of the faith of the Early Church, so we must recognize that the faith of Israel was expressed primarily in a precisely analogous manner (e.g. Deut. vi: 20-24; xxvi: 5-9; Josh. xxiv: 2-13), although occasionally we meet with a more abstract confession, as in Ex. xxxiv: 6, 7. But we must bear in mind that an essential part of the primitive Christian *kerygma* was the proclamation that the coming of Christ was the fulfilment of the Old Testament scriptures, so that He is 'the climactic event in God's redemptive history.' The writers of the New Testament related the coming of Christ to Old Testament history by means of Typology, which understands past events so that 'they possess their own original historical significance, but the eye of faith can discern that God has also set them as previews or types which point to greater or more complete facts',—in which it differs from Allegory, which fails to do justice to history. It must be admitted that there are times when it is not quite clear whether Dr. Wright himself really accepts the historicity of the events which he describes, as for example, the Sinai Covenant, which is sometimes treated as an inference from the Exodus experience and sometimes as a historic event. And at one point the typology appears to get out of control and Moses is said to have been 'saved from Pharaoh's slaughter of the Egyptian first-born'! Dr. Wright finds it difficult to fit the wisdom literature into his interpretation of the Old Testament as a recital of God's saving acts, but he does not make a virtue

of systematization, and the book can be unreservedly recommended to those who seek an answer to the question, 'But what is Biblical Theology ?'

The scholar who has done most in recent years to remind us of the importance of the New Testament *kerygma* is undoubtedly Dr. C. H. Dodd, and he may be said to have returned to this theme in a lecture delivered a year ago in London, and now published as *The Old Testament in the New*.¹ His main theme is the conscious appeal by the New Testament writers to the Old Testament as a source of authority for the Church. Dodd, like Wright, distinguishes the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament from allegorizing, such as was employed by Philo. Moreover, he claims that the passages used are quoted not simply for their own sake, but as pointing to the context in which they are situated, a context which they believed could throw light on the situation in which they found themselves. Dr. Dodd draws our attention to Acts ii: 23, and claims that the paradox of Peter's assertion can only be resolved by seeing in the Old Testament the pattern for the events of the New. This pattern is most clearly seen in certain frequently quoted passages,—Is. liii; Ps. lxix; Dan. vii; Joel ii-iii; Zech. ix-xiv; Is. vi-ix. 'All these illustrate, in the last resort, varying aspects of the one divine plan now brought to its fulfilment in the events of the Gospel story.' The theme which runs through all these passages and the theme of the New Testament *kerygma* is one and the same, namely, humiliation and adversity followed by exaltation and achievement. And these past events were relevant to the New Testament preachers and writers because they saw themselves 'living through the drama of disaster and glory, of death and resurrection, which in a variety of ways, and with greater or less elaboration, is the "plot" of them all.' Moreover, since Jesus as Son of Man includes in Himself the whole of the New Israel, His death and resurrection 'are seen as the fulfilment of the whole purpose of God to raise up for Himself, through suffering, tribulation and disaster, a people made wholly one in Him and devoted to His righteous purpose.' Hence the appropriateness of Hos. vi: 1-3, with its reference to the raising up of *Israel* as the passage to which Paul looks back in I Cor. xv: 4. The pamphlet,—for it is hardly more than that,—is a brief one, and the treatment of it here must necessarily be brief. Nevertheless, its size is no indication of its value, and in these days of expensive books it is definitely a bargain at two shillings.

B. F. PRICE.

The Liturgy of the Church of South India, by T. S. Garrett. (O.U.P. Rupees Two. 1952.)

This little book of some ninety pages consists of two parts, an introduction to, and a commentary on, 'The Service of the Lord's Supper' as authorized by the Church of South India. The introduction, based largely on Archbishop Brilioth's book, 'Eucharistic Faith and Practice', is a straightforward exposition of sacramental theology. The

¹ University of London: The Athlone Press. 2s.

commentary that follows deals in detail with the different parts of the Liturgy of the Church of South India, drawing out the principles underlying its shape and explaining its different actions and prayers. In an Appendix Mr. Garrett adds 'Proposals for Revision' made since the Liturgy was first published in June, 1950.

The introduction, as exposition of sacramental and eucharistic theology, will be most valuable to laymen and clergy (though it ought to be already familiar to the latter) not only in the Church of South India, but also elsewhere in India. The commentary on the Liturgy of the Church of South India will naturally be of most value to members of that Church, and will undoubtedly help them to a deeper understanding of their worship; but all who are interested in the development of a Liturgy native to Indian soil will find much of interest here too, since the Liturgy is one that has its origin in India and many prayers and actions in it have been found satisfying in an Indian setting.

Perhaps in the next edition the text of the Liturgy could be included, as unless one is very familiar with it, the commentary fails in its purpose. Otherwise this is an admirable book, and may be commended to all who wish to know something not only of the worship of the Church of South India but also of the elementary principles of sacramental theology.

PETER de D. MAY.

Christ's Hope of the Kingdom, by Alexander McLeish. World Dominion Press, London, pp. 165. Price Rs. 6.

Here is a fresh study of the 'Hope of the Kingdom', which is at once illuminating, disturbing and challenging in a rare degree.

The book is divided into two sections, Section I dealing with the Hope of the Kingdom in the New Testament, and Section II dealing with that Hope today. In the first Section, the author, surveying Christ's teaching, shows in their right perspective the different aspects of the Kingdom, thus giving a valuable corrective to wrong interpretations and misunderstandings that are sometimes current in the Church today. He stresses the fact that for Christ and His disciples the Kingdom of God represented not a vague, pious idealism, but a concept that dominates life and challenges it to action. His exposition deals with such leading ideas as God's right over the affairs of men, the hope of the Kingdom centering in Christ, the nearness of the Kingdom, the elimination of the time element from the conception of the Kingdom, the Kingdom as a way of life and an emerging world order, the Kingdom as the domain of the spirit and of a spirit-filled community, the consummation of the Kingdom in history; and in the treatment of these important themes the author reveals penetrating insight and a commendable sense of proportion, though he attempts a most difficult task in compressing his discussion of fundamental truths into a relatively short space.

The author comes to grips with modern problems in the life and thought of the Church, in the second Section of the book, where his clear understanding and refreshing treatment make this part of the book of special value to leaders of churches and missions in India and elsewhere. He maintains that the principle of integration, so much in our

thoughts today, has a new relevance in relation to the programmes and policies of the Church. For example, he says, evangelism should be integrated to those other factors that make up the objective of the Church, as in the primitive church Kerygma, Koinonia and Diakonia were bound together; 'These three factors are not separable in action' (p. 102). . . . 'there is no such thing as evangelism without the emerging fellowship' (p. 104). 'On the one hand we have had too much mere proclamation and too little building up of the "believing community" into the fully functioning Church, and on the other too much pastoral care of the sheltered community, with too little witnessing zeal' (p. 105). Similarly in expounding the nature of the missionary obligation the author pleads for an integrated view of the elements constituting evangelism, such as personal testimony, the witness of the Christian fellowship, and the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit, an experience that the Church of our generation needs to regain.

In the last two chapters, the writer, like a good preacher preaching for a verdict, brings all his powers of persuasion to bear upon his readers, calling upon them to adopt new attitudes toward the tasks confronting churches and missions in the world today. Here and in many other parts of the book one recognizes the voice of a veteran missionary statesman speaking out of his experience and pronouncing upon current problems in a truly ecumenical spirit. He says, 'The Church must be the most revolutionary force in the world today' (p. 93), 'To be its true self is the Church's only mission' (p. 104), 'We have, paradoxically, to forget the "Kingdom" and concentrate on God Himself and His righteousness, and then, and then alone, will the social justice and human betterment which men long for be found' (p. 146).

Ministers and missionaries of the Church in India should seriously study this challenging volume and bring its ideas to the rank and file of the membership of the Church in such a way as to grip their imagination.

C. E. ABRAHAM.



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