Book Reviews

An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology: by Robin H. S. Boyd. C.L.S., 1969. Pp. 282. Price Rs.6.50.

Dr. Boyd's hard and exhaustive study of the past hidden and 'inglorious' writings of significant Indians, his sympathetic but scientifically legitimate observations and interpretations, his massive collection of material as data for students of Indian Christian theology, mark him out as a pioneer in this field, and they permanently place Indians in his debt. He has indeed rendered yeoman service to Indian Christian theology.

Indian Christian theology, as lucidly analysed and explained by the author, has its counterpart in the Apostolic and early Church. The simple trust and child-like way of life of the fishermen was converted into philosophy and theology of the Graeco-Roman categories. This happened in the *logos* theology of St. John and in the mystic Christ of Paul in the Bible itself, let alone theologians like Origen, Tertullian and St. Augustine in the early Church. The author justly cites Bishop Westcott 'who believed that the most profound commentary on the Fourth Gospel was still to be written, and that it could not be written until an Indian theologian would undertake the task'. The author believes that with men like Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and Appasamy such a time had already dawned in India and that there is ample evidence of Indian Christian theology.

Formerly there used to be a doubt whether the Chenchiah group of thinkers can be classed as theologians; now the author's unearthing of several of the past converts as theologians not only confirms the later ones as theologians but adds lustre to them as such. Whether one accepts his classification of them as theologians or not, the author does deserve our gratitude for the findings he has placed before us of theological thinking of people through several centuries.

The work merits a few critical observations:

(1) The author should have raised a discussion on what theology means in its original context, in its ramifications through history, and in its modern context whether it can be given an interpretation peculiar to India. This discussion would have been helpful, for, as distinct from the West, in the East, particularly in India, theology is coeval with life in society. The general philosophical tradition of the West tended to render theology a matter of *ideas* rather than of life; in India religion is written into

the day-to-day activities of the individual and society, and consequently it is hard to discern a theology in the Western sense of the term, much less a system of neatly defined theology. The author rightly says: 'Chenchiah did not make any attempt to give a full and systematic presentation of his views and in fact was strongly opposed to the idea of the systematic explication of Christian belief' (p. 147). He himself confirms it when he says: 'The first tendency to be noted is that of the reconciling of opposites. We have noticed . . . how it is possible in Hindu thought to hold simultaneously the belief in such apparently irreconcilable ideas as *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa Brahman* . . . Thus it is easy for Hindu thinkers to say that all religions are true; what is meant is that on the practical or *vyavaharika* level they are true, but the ultimate Truth which they represent transcends this level, is finally unknowable, and cannot be translated into propositional form' (p. 231). Therefore whatever system or definition we may work out and impose on Indian religious thinking, it is bound to be of a Western mould of theology; and consequently the Western ideas persist in all the interpretations offered by the author.

(2) Let us note a few examples without sticking to any particular sequence.

On p. 39 the author cites Dr. F. Muliyil's observations on the movements of Brahma Samaj that 'from the point of view of the Church in India it is the story of a great rejection' and 'dissents' from him in holding that God prepared their ideas to be used 'as instruments of Christian theology'. I submit here that Dr. Muliyil is closer to fact than the author.

The author's interpretation of the early converts in their rejection of Hinduism and in their understanding of Christianity in Hindu categories needs security at several points. What, in depth and width, is their understanding of Hinduism? What makes them reject it? Why struggle to mould Christianity into Hindu categories? An Indian reader considers it imperialistic on the part of a Christian to offer such interpretations as: 'He is concerned that the reality of the religious experience of millions of Hindus for hundreds of years should not be denied. Yet at best Hinduism is for him a stage on the journey to something more ultimate, and the final stage is found only in Christ' (p. 82). The author appears to be forcing an interpretation alien to the nature and derivation of the word *Saccidānanda* so as to fit it into the Christian meaning and experience of the triune God when he says: 'In other words, Hinduism provides a mind prepared for a triune understanding of God as *Sat, Cit* and *Ananda,* and is in a sense waiting for these terms to be filled with a richer content than they now have . . . Is not the terminology as well fitted to express the inner nature of the Godhead as are Greek terms like *ousia* and *hypostasis*? It has seemed to some theologians that the correspondence is not fortuitous but is an indication of the way in which God has in India been preparing a people for himself, and giving them instruments of thought by which they might

better know and proclaim him' (pp. 235–236). Again, speaking of bridging the gap between man and God, *Īśvara* and *Brahman*, he says: 'Whatever term we use—*Narahari, Īśvara, saguṇa Brahman, Cit*—points only to Christ. He alone is that sure Link between God and the creation which Indian philosophy and Indian religion so deeply need' (p. 254). Cf. the last para on p. 264.

The trinitarian concept of God is a result of the life and experience of a people belonging to a Judaeo-Christian Biblical background; the trimurti concept of God is a result of the life and experience of a people belonging to an Indo-Aryan Vedic background. It is one thing if we relate the two on the basis of religious experience common to human beings; it is quite a different thing if one is related to the other as a 'crown' of fulfilment. The latter version is not true to facts; and no Hindu, and much less an informed Hindu, will accept the statement. If the 'burden' of Christian theology is only to justify itself as 'fulfilment' of other religions and cultures, it is high time that such a theology should 'sit at the feet' of Jesus to unlearn its arrogance and to live obediently worthy of its task.

(3) The author says on pp. 260–261: 'What Indian theology is attempting to do should be sharply distinguished from the work of Western theologians like Bultmann, Tillich and Bishop Robinson in reformulating Christian doctrines in modern 'demythologized' terminology . . . But the whole Indian cultural background is different and what is needed for effective Christian witness is not demythologizing but rather the reclothing of the underlying truth in another set of terms and thought-forms, which is already in existence and is as rich and vivid as the original Graeco-Roman context.' Here again, the author does not seem to sympathize with the social and economic condition of Asia and Africa. An African Negro, teaching in the U.S.A., said: 'To a Westerner religion is a luxury; but to an Asian and African religion is life and struggle. Therefore, the traditional form as well as content must yield to the new and relevant developments in life and society. Therefore, we need men like Bultmann and Robinson to thrill us out of our lethargy and complacency.' Dogmatics has no place in the Indian context.

(4) I am uneasy in my mind about the author's selection and list of his Indian theologians. Men like Sadhu Sundar Singh and Paul Sudhakar would not accept to be classed as theologians. They are revivalists and evangelists. Even with reference to other converts, for some of them it will be difficult to draw the line between such and several others in the regional language areas. However, the need of the Indian Church today is to develop a theology of 'hard work' and 'progress', and this can be effected only by a revolutionary orientation to faith in God (even as did the prophets and Jesus), not by revivalist or dogmatic approach. Dr. Devanandan says:

> '. . . For here the religion and the environment act in turn as both stimulus and response. The interaction leads

always to such a revolutionary shake-up of the foundations of the creed that the consequence is not merely a repatterning of fundamentals but a restatement of fundamentals. The old faith is not merely revived and restated; it acquires in the process a new vitality, an amazingly new resilience, a surprisingly new meaning' (Christian concern in Hinduism, pp. 15–16).

Gurukul P. DAVID

Christianity: The Witness of History: by J. N. D. Anderson. Tyndale Press. 1969. Pp. 110. Price 7*s.* 6*d.*

This is a sensible, fair-minded and non-technical defence, along traditional lines, of the orthodox Christian interpretation of New Testament evidence. It is written by a trained lawyer (Professor of Oriental Laws in the University of London) who consciously brings his legal experience to bear upon the problems. It is aimed at the intelligent agnostic who is at least prepared to consider the claims of the New Testament with an open mind; but it will probably prove equally rewarding to the inquiring Christian who finds himself wondering, in his heart of hearts, whether the groundwork of his faith will stand up to sober historical investigation. The author shows himself to be well abreast of modern popular but respectable literature on the subject; and has the sense to allow Moule, Bornkamm, Pannenberg and others to speak for themselves at some length. He moves with assurance among such topics as the 'Christ of Faith *v.* the Jesus of History', though not surprisingly he comes down firmly on the side of Bornkamm in insisting that 'we must look for the history in the *kerygma* and that we should not be resigned or sceptical about the historical Jesus'. There is never a shadow of doubt about where his argument is leading, but the reader is not aware of having the wool pulled over his eyes *en route*. Unfortunately, having shown himself commendably aware of the insights of Form Criticism and the complexities of Synoptic scholarship, he tends to treat all texts with a dead-pan impartiality (e.g. Matt. 12:39 f. is serenely cited as a prediction by Jesus of the resurrection, whereas the Lukan parallel suggests that v. 40 is a Matthean gloss, and not one of his brightest ones at that). The heartening thing is that the author's occasional lapses of scholarship do not materially affect his case, and his concluding chapter on the Empty Tomb displays a refreshingly common-sense approach to the problem. Having admitted that the Empty Tomb is, by normal standards, improbable, he challenges the reader to find an explanation which is more probable than the Christian one and, with nice legal judiciousness, asks what we mean by 'probable' anyway.

Bishop's College I. D. L. CLARK
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Ministerial Priesthood: by R. C. Moberly with an introduction by A. T. Hanson. S.P.C.K., London, 1969. Price 21*s*.

This classical commentary on the Anglican Ordinal is a reprint of the second edition (of 1910), the original edition having been issued in 1897. The present paper-back omits the 53 page appendix on 'the recent Roman controversy on the validity of Anglican Orders' and contains an illuminating introduction by Anthony Hanson, known to many in India.

Why has this old book been reissued after 70 years? The answer is that it is the classical treatment of the doctrine of priesthood. This is the permanent value of this book. With a wealth of learning and cautious argument Moberly expounds the theology and character of Christian priesthood. His contention is that ordained priesthood is derived from Christ's own priesthood which is primarily sacrificial and pastoral; that it is exercised in and through the priesthood of the whole Church as its instrument and organ; and that it consists in self-giving for the sake of others and as such pioneers in Christian living. The author shows how the New Testament doctrine of priesthood has been distorted into 'vicarious priesthood' in the Roman Catholic church. The theology of priesthood which in that Church has become orientated to the sacrifice of the Eucharist is happily being revised in the context of the *aggiornamento.*

The heart of this book is its last chapter, 'Priesthood in the Church of Christ'. It is a piece of sustained argument packed with profound learning. It constitutes essential reading for every ordinand. For some years I have been lecturing on the seminal ideas of this chapter to the ordinands at Bishop's College in their final term. Recently I read the review of a book, *Patterns of Ministry* (Collins), by Stephen Mackie. This is a book on theological education, and the author seems to think that the days of training for the sacred ministry are over. It will be a bad day for our theological colleges and seminaries if training for the ministry is replaced by 'theological education'. All this makes one feel most grateful for Moberly's *Ministerial Priesthood* which stands out like a lighthouse on a hazy horizon.

Bangalore E. SAMBAYYA

Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary: by John B. Taylor. Tyndale Press. Pp. 285. Price 12*s*.

Judges and Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary: by A. E. Cundall and Leon Morris. Tyndale Press. 1968. Price 15*s*.

J. B. Taylor's commentary on *Ezekiel* is a model of clear and concise exegesis. It should enhance the reputation of the Tyndale Bible Commentaries which already stands deservedly high. He argues for the unity of the book, though the prophet wrote the last nine chapters 'some years later than the rest of the book',

and the whole was given its final form by an editor. On the notoriously difficult question of the locale of Ezekiel's ministry Taylor comes down firmly in favour of Babylon for the whole and against the possibility of a Palestinian locus for any of the prophecies.

His treatment of Ezekiel's symbolic acts is rather inadequate. He rules out any possibility of these acts being akin to the sympathetic magic practised by Israel's neighbours, on the grounds that this is to 'blur the distinctiveness of the religion of Israel'; but in his anxiety on this score he also excludes the possibility that in Israel these acts were brought within the scope of the will of Yahweh and, in this new context, given a new and potent meaning. Symbolic acts in Israel were regarded as effecting what they signified and not simply as 'signs of what God intended to do' (page 77). Since many of Ezekiel's actions come into this category this is an important point. Taylor's argument does seem to weaken the force of these actions.

A. E. Cundall concedes that the stories of *Judges* are 'older than the framework in which they are set', but in the next sentence adds 'they may be regarded as contemporaneous with the events described'. In justification for this Cundall adds, 'Our increasing knowledge of the accuracy with which traditions of ancient peoples, such as the Israelites, have been handed down through the ages guards against the assumption of major deviations occurring in the narratives themselves during this period' (page 22). Now while this is true it does not mean that we can accept the historical accuracy of the entire narrative, which is what Cundall appears to do. Critical study of the Old Testament is tending more and more to reach conservative conclusions, but one cannot help feeling that Cundall, like some other conservative evangelical scholars, is using critical methods to reach conclusions he has previously reached for dogmatic reason. None the less this commentary is in no sense obscurantist, and like the one reviewed above shows that the gap between 'critical' and 'conservative', though still very real, is much narrower than it was a generation ago. It would be narrowed still further if writers in this series would deliberately eschew their irritating over-use of the word 'spiritual' where it is manifestly out of context.

Ruth is a book about whose date and purpose critical opinion is deeply divided. Leon Morris argues tentatively for a date in the early monarchy, rejecting the linguistic arguments for a later date. He regards the book as 'setting out the obligations of piety within the family' and 'as a tale told because it is true, and because it shows something of the relation between God and man'. This is neither more nor less convincing than other views about this difficult problem of the book's purpose.

Although both of these books pack an abundance of material into a short space they are easy to read, and in the case of *Ezekiel* the argument is clarified by some admirable diagrams. Both books afford excellent guides for the student reading these O.T. books

for the first time, provided he is aware of their 'conservative' bias.

Bareilly ROGER HOOKER

Set Free to be a Servant: Studies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians: by L. Newbigin. C.L.S., 1969. Pp. 72. Price Rs.1.20.

Here is a useful little commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, simply and lucidly written for the 'younger churches', Bishop Newbigin, from the wealth of his experience in India and his scholarship, ably draws out the practical implications of the Epistle for the situation of the church today, and especially in the developing countries. Ministers will find it useful for sermons; students for meditation study; and the laity for guidance in daily living.

Bishop's College
Calcutta R. W. BOWIE

The Work and Words of Jesus: by A. M. Hunter. C.L.S., 1969. Pp. 145. Price Rs.3.25.

This book, which was first published in 1950 in Great Britain and has been profitably used by successive generations of students, is now reissued in an Indian edition. It is written in an easily readable style and will prove an excellent introduction to the study of the Gospels for theology students and laymen alike. It is meant to be read with a copy of the New Testament at hand for constant reference. The author does not gloss over difficulties but tries to give intelligible and acceptable solutions to the various problems and warns against certain extremes of critical opinion.

The book is divided into three parts. The first one deals with the assumptions of critical study, the sources and the background. The second is concerned with the nativity stories and the account of John the Baptist and ends with an account of the temptation. The third part is the most valuable section of the book and deals with the Ministry of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus on various themes like the Kingdom of God and the future as well as about Himself and His death is summarized in separate chapters. The sections on the meaning of miracles and the resurrection are of special interest because, along with recognizing the need of critical examination of the evidence for particular incidents, they also emphasize the historical actuality of some of the events and their importance. In India, where there is a special need of stressing the historical and of avoiding rationalistic or naturalistic interpretations of the miracle stories and the resurrection, this book and its emphases will be of great value.

The Christian Literature Society is to be congratulated for bringing out this Indian edition at a price that the Indian reader

can afford. Except for a few misprints where Greek words are used, the book is carefully and beautifully printed.

Serampore M. P. JOHN

Study Guide to Ephesians: by Francis Foulkes. Inter-Varsity Press. Pp. 144. Price 5*s.*

The Message of Galatians: by John R. W. Stott. Inter-Varsity Press. Pp. 191. Price 8*s.* 6*d.*

2 Peter and Jude: by Michael Green. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Tyndale Press. Pp. 192. Price 13*s.* 6*d.*

Revelation: by Leon Morris. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Tyndale Press. Pp. 263. Price 17*s.*

As its title suggests, Mr. Foulkes' book is an outline Bible Study of the Letter to the Ephesians. In an Introduction the author sets out the purpose of the study, namely, 'to study the words and expressions Paul uses', thus 'we will come to understand the purpose of God as Paul came to know it'. For this purpose the Letter is divided into two main sections, cc. 1–3, 'The Purpose of God in Christ', and cc. 4–6, 'The Purpose of God in the Christian', totalling 43 studies which follow a uniform pattern of the passage studied (R.S.V. Text), exposition of important words or phrases, prayer, sometimes brief exegetical notes and hints for further study. It is what one might call 'straight exposition', the reader himself is expected to see the application of scripture to his own situation, except for hints occasionally in the prayers or notes for further study. A simple, straightforward treatment designed to give basic help, nothing exciting.

Mr. Stott's book is similar, yet different, in that it is the sum of 20 sermons preached at All Souls Church, Langham Place, London. It is similar in that it sets out to give a detailed exposition of the whole Letter to the Galatians in Mr. Stott's usual style. In fact, one wonders whether these can rightly be called sermons, they are extended Bible Study in monologue style. The exposition is laced here and there with attacks on those with whom Mr. Stott disagrees in the matter of the understanding of scripture. Usually these opponents are anonymous, but once or twice named, like the Rev. Harry Williams, in a footnote, and Prof. C. H. Dodd, 'who has made a great contribution to the Biblical theology movement, nevertheless . . .' While Mr. Stott has doubtless achieved what he set out to do, to the probable satisfaction of the hundreds who turn up on a Sunday evening at All Souls, his is hardly a great contribution. This may be due to the transposition from pulpit to page. Mr. Stott has an inimitable pulpit style, he also writes attractively, but read consecutively what was originally heard at weekly intervals shows up some of the weaknesses of this method of 'preaching'. The over-all effect borders on the

boring. Ideas, even phrases and Bible cross-references are repeated more than once. The whole is put across in the (by now) traditional conservative evangelical mode, which makes no concessions to contemporary language or thought forms. This is definitely 'in-group' exposition. To get the message, you must master the medium.

The other two books are quite different, both being scholarly works aimed at the serious theological student, 'primarily exegetical and only secondarily homiletic', without being exhaustive studies, albeit based on exhaustive study, as the lists of consulted works testify.

Coming as they do from a general background of 'conservative' theology, the results are what one would expect on such matters as authorship. The apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter, Jude, the brother of our Lord (i.e. the brother of James, who is taken to be the brother of our Lord), wrote Jude, John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, wrote Revelation. These conclusions are reached, in the case of 2 Peter 'provisionally', in the case of Revelation implicitly, after sifting the major factors for determining authorship. Both books provide the arguments for and against in succinct form. But one has the feeling always that the argument is never really an open one from the beginning, e.g. the habit, especially in Revelation, of outlining the arguments against first and then attempting to demolish them with the traditional views with arguments sometimes pushed to incredible, almost ridiculous, lengths, e.g. in dealing with 2 Pet. 3:4 and the exegesis of 'the fathers', or again 2 Pet. 3:2, 'your apostles', or again in dealing with the Seer's barbaric language in Revelation. It is also seen in the treatment of some theological ideas held by some scholars to be sub-apostolic, such as the idea of 'partaking of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4). To quote Mr. Green, 'But is the idea, of being a partaker of the divine nature, too advanced for Peter? It is intrinsically no different from being born from above, being the temple of the Holy Spirit, being in Christ or being the dwelling-place of the Trinity.' This is a gigantic claim, which takes no notice of reasonable exposition of the other ideas mentioned; nor of the important question, nor is it too advanced for Peter, but is this apostolic theology? It takes no account either of the Thomist flavour of such a statement, a Thomism which is at variance with what is usually taken to be conservative Protestant theology. But then this statement is in scripture, so it must be assimilated, even though it may be at variance with one's over-all theology. Inconsistencies are made to be overlooked.

But it is Mr. Green who shows a glimmer of hope that a crack may be appearing in the conservative armour. He is for one thing more prepared to be open on the question of the authorship of 2 Peter, after all he only claims Petrine authorship 'provisionally'. That is a big step forward. But how serious a step is it! That remains to be seen. Meantime the following quotation is interesting:

'If, however, it could be conclusively proved that 2 Peter is that otherwise unexampled thing, a perfectly orthodox epistolary pseudepigraph, I, for one, believe that we should have to accept the fact that God did employ the literary genre of pseudepigraphy for the communicating of His revelation. I would accept it as I accept the history and proverb, the myth and poetry, the apocalyptic and wisdom literature, and all the other types of literary form which go to make up Holy Scripture. It is not, therefore, from obscurantism or *parti pris* that I am advocating the Petrine authorship of this Epistle . . . it is because I remain unconvinced by the arguments brought against it.'

Of course, Mr. Green covers himself with one or two apparently innocuous words and phrases which make one wonder if there has been any real step forward, or whether he is merely ensuring that his book will be published by the Tyndale Press. Asking for *conclusive* proof concerning a document 1,800 to 1,900 years old is like asking for the moon. Also Mr. Green in his phrase, 'that otherwise unexampled thing', completely ignores the doubts expressed about the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Peter and Ephesians.

I must say I find these kinds of arguments for and against authorship rather tedious. I mention them only out of duty to the authors, since they obviously consider them an important part of their work, judged by the amount of space and verbal energy spent on them. The positive value of these books really comes out in the exegesis, plain straightforward, concise, and very useful for the diploma-level theological student, saying which will probably only encourage the B.D. student to make do with these books. Not that the B.D. student won't find much of value, it is just that he might be expected to delve rather more deeply into the heart of things. One final compliment, the books are attractively produced compared with earlier numbers in this series, with clear print, though the printer's devil has been at work here and there. The cost of books seems destined to rise continuously, which is a problem for the average theological student and pastor in India, but if the cash is available these books, especially *Revelation*, which is very sensibly handled by Mr. Morris, are worth the money.

U.T.C. TERRY THOMAS
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What is Christianity?: by Robin H. S. Boyd. C.L.S., 1970. Pp. 186. Price Rs.2.75.

Your Christian Calling: An explanation of the Rule of Life of the C.I.P.B.C.: by Ronald W. Bryan. I.S.P.C.K., 1960 (revised edition 1969). Pp. 143. Price Rs.3.

What is Christianity? is the sort of book that provides in a short compass all that is essential for a working but adequate

knowledge of the origin, history and meaning of Christianity for people living in this bewildering, fast-moving space-age. There is evidence all round, especially among young people, of a pathetic loss of the sense of direction and meaning of human existence. This is a matter of deep concern to all who care for the youth of our time. This book seems to have grown out of this concern, and is to be heartily recommended as an aid to our understanding of our own faith and the duties and obligations it lays upon the members of the Christian Church.

The author first sets up Jesus Christ as the standard of human life against which every human being can measure his own existence in the world to see whether human life makes any sense at all. The author then goes on to the historical development and doctrinal implications which arise out of the impact of the divine-human revelation of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible. The author ably deals with such important matters as sin and forgiveness and the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, in terms which can be easily understood. Of special interest in India is the author's plea that Christianity rightly understood is not a foreign religion. On the contrary, Christianity fulfils the desires and aspirations of the soul of India. Finally, the author deals fairly with the subject of science *v.* religion, and shows that it was Christianity which helped to preserve (in the Dark Ages) and then later to promote scientific research and inventiveness. Thus in a short compass the author has dealt with the essence of Christianity and shown that it does provide for modern man a world-view which gives meaning and direction to human life in the world today.

Some time ago, at the instance of the General Council of the C.I.P.B.C., the I.S.P.C.K. published a *Rule of Life* for the members of the Anglican Communion in India. This was beautifully produced and published, and is to be found hung up in many of our homes and churches. This reviewer, however, felt all the time that a simple exposition of the *Rule of Life* was urgently needed, so that people might not only decorate their homes and churches, but also more fully understand the privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church of Christ. This little expository booklet is to be warmly welcomed as it is the fruit of a long and successful pastoral ministry among the old and young members of the Church. This book should be translated into the major languages of India so that it may be easily available both to members of the Church who can read it for themselves, and to Sunday School and Bible Class teachers as a handbook of information. It will also be found highly useful for the instruction of confirmation candidates and catechumens.

Asansol EMMANUEL SADIQ

The Finality of Christ: by Lesslie Newbigin. S.C.M. Press, London, 1969. Pp. 115. Price 8*s*. 6*d*.

Who is Jesus Christ?: by A. O. Dyson. S.C.M. Press, London, 1969. Pp. 124. Price 8*s*. 6*d*.

Frontline Theology: edited by Dean Peerman. S.C.M. Press, London, 1967. Pp. 170. Price 12*s*. 6*d*.

The title of Bishop Newbigin's book has in India the familiarity of an ache, for his subject is one to which Indian theology continually returns (as in the last conference of the Indian Christian Theological Association at Ranchi on 'Knowing Jesus Christ in India Today'). One could hardly deny, however, that the issue to which he addresses himself is central for Christians and he has, in fact, produced a telling 'tract for the times' in India and a statement which will be of value for those who wish to understand the situation of the Church in India.

Bishop Newbigin's aim is to show what it means to claim finality for Christ, to find 'the sense in which uniqueness and finality ought to be claimed for the Christian faith'. He makes this investigation within the context of an awareness of the setting of faith and the situation of the Church in India (one would expect this of the author of *The Household of God* which 20 years ago showed an awareness of the setting of Church life in the modern world). While saying this one might wish for a more thorough analysis of 'Hindu' views alongside the Bishop's study of different attitudes to 'religion' in the Church in India since 1910. His discussion, though rooted in Indian experience, moves too much within a Western milieu—though this allows him scope for rebuking Tillich (by name) and Bultmann (by implication) for surrender to an essentially 'Hindu' point of view. He observes as he does this that 'This Hindu point of view has become very general in the Western world, even among those who would be surprised to learn that they were stating the Hindu position'. In contrast to Eastern and Western views which surrender to a dualism between 'spiritual' and 'material-historical', or between 'inward' and 'outward', the Christian faith is 'an interpretation of history' and demands an outlook integrating these two dimensions of experience; 'It belongs to the necessary implications of the Gospel that we abandon the dichotomy between a purely personal, inward and spiritual world . . . and the outward world of historical events.' Uniqueness and finality ought to be claimed for Christ because he both commands and embodies a decisive interpretation of history.

'Christianity is an interpretation of history.' The phrase was used by Bishop J. A. T. Robinson in *Liturgy coming to Life*. It serves Bishop Newbigin well in this new book and moreover indicates a measure of agreement between him and A. O. Dyson, author of *Who is Jesus Christ*? The latter's book moves almost entirely within the realm of European theology. It takes up the

question left aside by Bishop Newbigin, one that must be honestly faced: Dyson asks not merely what it means to claim finality for Christ but on what basis we do so, particularly as serious students are compelled to acknowledge 'the diversity of the tradition about Jesus Christ'. Dyson's wrestlings with Troeltsch, Bultmann, Buri, Ogden and Jaspers (with endearing honesty, 'with one foot in the camp of the unbeliever') are bound to be helpful not only in Europe but also in India where similar questions are raised. Dyson's rather tentative conclusion, as has been indicated, shows that he and Bishop Newbigin are not far apart. He turns to Teilhard's doctrine of the cosmic Christ. He maintains that 'all the insights contained in the analysis of personal existence associated with Bultmann, Buri and Ogden are contained in Teilhard's pattern of thought, though they would be there set in a far richer and more comprehensive framework'—precisely the framework of serious attention to history and to vistas of man's enlarging knowledge of his cosmos, but also attention to faith in Jesus Christ who compels this vision and this attention to history.

Dyson's is an exciting work. The same may be said for *Frontline Theology*. This book brings together essays on the present state of theology in America by 18 authors, with an introduction by Martin E. Marty. Taken together these essays show, firstly, how theology has become an oecumenical enterprise. Their setting in American life shows itself again and again, but the issues they deal with transcend their cultural setting (or since the last thing that these theologians would want would be to produce theology out of touch with their cultural setting, would it be better to say that since human culture is increasingly homogeneous, their issues are our issues ?). Similarly, two essays are by Roman Catholics, but this indicates quite insufficiently how American Protestant and American Roman Catholic theologians share one universe of discourse.

In the essays as a whole, secondly, there is an almost violent sense of the movement of history. One should in saying this remember that the same sense was shown by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* one hundred years ago—giving credit where credit is due and acknowledging the slowness of even *avant-garde* theology. Along with the sense of the movement of history there is an attempt to come to grips with historical or secular reality. Most of the authors commend a greater 'empiricism' in theology.

But empirical theology does not necessarily involve acceptance of the absurdities of radical historicism as in some expressions of the 'death of God' theology. Langdon Gilkey speaks of the predominant mood of secularism as 'the visceral sense that reality lies nowhere but amidst the visible and tangible' but yet affirms the validity of 'God's language': 'The discovery of God, and so of the meaningfulness of language about him, comes when in this dimension of mystery and the sacred an answer to our fundamental questions is found, and "doctrines" of God are elaborations of such answers experienced in the course of our daily life in the

world.' Kenneth Hamilton speaks of 'the futility of trimming theology to fit the mental contours of a hypothetical twentieth-century man'.

One finds in this volume indications of recent helpful modifications of linguistic philosophy to allow one to speak of experiences of faith. There are affirmations of the depth and value of tradition, most notably in essays by Jaroslav Pelikan and Kenneth Hamilton. The former speaks of 'some Church Father of the nineteenth or twentieth century' becoming 'the criterion for judging the quick and the dead' where there is a lack of study of and immersion in the riches of Christian tradition. This gibe has still some relevance at least to theological institutions in India.

But the most exciting essay in this collection is by John B. Cobb. He warns that a great effort is necessary to challenge the dominant mentality which shuts off modern Christians from (he suggests) levels of reality experienced more fully by Christians in other ages. 'The emerging atheism of our day is rooted in highly self-conscious and reflective thought. Any adequate response to its challenge must be seriously made, at its own intellectual level. Modern dominant philosophical currents oppose the renewal of belief in God; it is impossible for us to avoid a struggle with them. Natural theology has thus become, as never before in Christian history, a matter of utmost urgency for the church.' This reviewer finds Cobb's sanity compelling and his conclusion correct.

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Book Notes

[Mention here neither implies nor precludes subsequent reviews]

Two outstanding contributions to sympathetic dialogue with Hinduism are Abhishiktananda's *Hindu and Christian Meeting Point; Within the Cave of the Heart* (C.I.S.R.S., Rs.3.50) and Klaus Klostermaier's beautifully produced but expensive *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (S.C.M., £1.05). Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai's *Shri Khrist Gita* (I.S.P.C.K., Rs.3) is an attractive and imaginatively produced little paperback, presenting extracts from the Gospels as a continuous 'Song of the Lord Christ'—an unwitting commentary on Kai Baago's thesis in *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (C.I.S.R.S. and C.L.S., Rs.5.50), and something which would have delighted C. F. Andrews, whose centenary is commemorated by I. D. L. Clark's *C. F. Andrews, Deenabandhu* (I.S.P.C.K., Rs.2). S.P.C.K. (London) have reissued Weitbrecht Stanton's standard, *The Teaching of the Qur'an,* originally published in 1919 but now equipped with a new up-to-date bibliography (£1.25).

Biblical studies are well served by Ivan Engnell's controversial but highly important *Critical Essays on the O.T.* (S.P.C.K., £2.50) and Hans Conzelmann's long-awaited *An Outline Theology of the N.T.* (S.C.M., £2.50), and T. & T. Clark have published *Neotestamentica et Semitica* (£2.75), a festschrift in honour of Prof. Matthew Black which despite a forbidding title contains a wide assortment of N.T. studies by international scholars. S.P.C.K. have continued their series of T.E.F. 'Study Guides' with *A Guide to the Book of Genesis* (9*s.*) by John Hargreaves, and a revised issue of the same author's *Guide to St. Mark's Gospel* (10*s.*). Both are copiously and imaginatively illustrated. Gnana Robinson's *Religion of Israel* (in Tamil; C.L.S., Rs.8) is produced for the Tamil Theological Book Club.

If modern theology is concerned with asking the right questions, David Jenkins' title, *Living with Questions: Investigations into the Theory and Practice of Belief in God* (S.C.M., 28*s.*), arouses anticipations which the author's reputation is likely to fulfil. S.P.C.K.'s 'Theological Collections' are now well established (though sadly overpriced). No. 12 is entitled *Providence* (16*s.*), and No. 13 *The Christian Hope* (£1). The late Karl Barth's lifelong work is rounded off with the posthumous appearance of *Church Dogmatics IV. 4* (T. & T. Clark, £2), but one of his ablest exponents, T. F. Torrance, has published a characteristically

rigorous but cogent contribution, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford, U.P., 25*s*.). Norman Pittenger has carried his exploration of the possibilities of 'process theology' further in *Christology Reconsidered* (S.C.M., £1.60), which he describes as an old man's 'final effort in Christology'. To one who saw him, not many years ago, ensconced in an Oxford pub striking sparks from an enthralled circle of young theological students, it seems unlikely to be anything of the kind; yet his message is very simple and very basic: 'Jesus Christ as the divine love en-manned, and thus made available to us.' For those who like their Christology hot, there comes Ernst Käsemann's *Jesus Means Freedom* (S.C.M., 16*s*.), subtitled *A Polemical Survey of the N.T.* Although its author enjoys a world-wide reputation as a N.T. scholar (post-Bultmann) he is first and foremost a survivor of the Confessing Church driven underground in Nazi Germany; and his book, we are told, 'grew out of the white-hot anger of a man who saw freedom of thought within the Church . . . endangered by the reactionary pressures of a movement which thrived on superficial slogans and emotionalism'.

What is to be the reaction of Christians in Asia to the Chinese revolution? What is God trying to say to the Church through the unlikely medium of Chairman Mao? C. R. Hensman, born in Ceylon, takes an objective look at our neighbours in *China: Yellow Peril? Red Hope?* (S.C.M., 18*s*.). Something of the fall-out is to be gathered nearer home in the joint C.I.S.R.S./C.L.S. publication, *Student Participation*, edited by Saral Chatterji (Rs.2).

Last but most important of all, perhaps, for readers both in India and abroad, M. M. Thomas' *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (S.C.M., £3.15).

I. D. L. C.