

Protestant Christians, and between the Byzantine and the Oriental churches.

However eagerly one awaits the unity of all Christians, not only in India but in all the world, one may doubt whether the road Dr. Zernov has outlined is the way to the goal. There are many charming features in the picture Dr. Zernov has made of Eastern Christianity, and no-one would deny that the rest of Christendom has much to learn from it. But its many obvious defects, of which this article has pointed out some, exposes the thesis that these churches have preserved better than any others the apostolic form of Christian truth to serious doubts, yet a study of Dr. Zernov's fascinating book is highly rewarding.

RELIGIONS

J. G. ARAPURA

The sub-title 'A Preliminary Historical and Theological Study' describes the aim and purposes of the book under review.¹ It does more; in fact it gives us, as the reading of the book will confirm, an insight into the method as well. It is customary for religions as well as religion to be studied historically so as to ensure the maximum of objectivity: historically means scientifically, assuming history to be a department of science. However the need for a theological study of the same universe of discourse has been for a long time felt; Kraemer, as is well-known, is its leading representative. Although the book under review is not likely to become the *magnum opus* of synthesis of the two types of approach to the study of the subject-matter, the awareness of having to do justice to both is one of the recognizable features of the work.

The author wisely makes a distinction between objectivity and what is professed as impartiality. He does not have any pretensions to the latter. In the place of impartiality—which he rules out as never really true in whatever case—he substitutes sympathy. He tells us 'There can be no such thing as absolute impartiality where vital matters are concerned; but sympathy with the sincere beliefs of others there must be' (p. ix). In other words, to put the matter in our own way, it amounts to saying that instead of pretending that the emotive attitudinal element can be eliminated, what is required—and practicable—is to introduce into it the right orientation.

This reviewer would agree with this opinion. The objective, although it is itself quite distinct and apart from the emotive attitudinal, has nevertheless got to function within the framework of that ineliminable element. However, what relationship sympathy has to objectivity, what really sympathy is and what

¹ D. W. Gundry: *Religions*. London: Macmillan & Co. 1958. Pp. 189. Price: 16s. net.

it is designed to do in our particular enquiry, are questions our author does not answer, nor even asks. But we appreciate the fact that as this book is not a systematic work, and has no pretensions to profundity, many gaps and gulfs are bound to exist.

Paired with the invitation to be sympathetic, there is the declaration that 'the point of view is openly Christian' (p. ix). The author claims that such a point of view is bound to be less intellectually and spiritually sterile than an agnostic or eclectic approach. This frank declaration is very refreshing for several reasons, and particularly because it prepares the reader to do thinking on the subject without adopting any pose.

The historical or the objective way and the theological way of studying the subject-matter of religion and religions are also alternatively called the descriptive and normative way respectively. On balance it would seem, however, that the author makes a stronger plea for the normative method than for the other, but he certainly does not neglect the latter. He is right in maintaining that when we study religion or any particular religion as it is, our ideas of what religion ought to be and what religion we would like to have are bound to creep in. 'The normative study of religions proceeds not from detachment but from our own ideas and ideals'. And 'even a scholarly survey of the great religions will not reveal to us the truth' (p. 3). In a genuine study of religion 'we are concerned not only with religion as it is, but with the truth or falsehood of religions and whether we ought to put ourselves under their allegiance' (p. 2). This kind of concern is what characterizes a theological study. In order to see where the theological study will lead us, which is the ultimate purpose of the book, it will be necessary to see the plan and the scope of the enquiry conducted in its pages.

The book seems to adopt a six-fold thematic division, although the author does not say so. A discerning reader can see it. The first is the most general one of religion as such: asking and trying to answer the question, What is religion? This we might say is the philosophical theme. The second one concerns the speculative inquiry into the origin of religion. The third is the historical theme of the religions of the ancient world. The fourth theme is the anthropological one of the primitive religions. The fifth is the comparative study of the major religions of the world. The last is the theological question of the normative principles of religion (coupled with the personal question of the kind of religion we ought to have for ourselves). This last theme takes us to the crux of the matter.

II

Although on the face of it the various themes might seem unconnected, such is actually not the case: there is a certain scheme behind it all and a certain problematic continuity though not readily recognizable. It is apparent that the main theses of

the author are two, with an intermediate one, which links the two together and serves as the point where the one line of thought is reflected off into the other.

The first thesis, simply put, is this: Religion in some form or other is inescapable and is universal. It is stated, 'It is almost impossible not to have a religion; for even a denial of the commonly accepted teachings of the great religious systems by an individual leaves him still with a way of looking at things, a way of behaving and a way of feeling. Atheism itself is a kind of religion, though a negative one' (p. 7). Chapters I-VI, in which the various tasks of definition of religion, the survey of ancient, primitive, and major religions, are all undertaken, are designed to prove this point. Looking back at these chapters, the author observes at the opening of Chapter VII, thus, 'Our survey of the religious experience of mankind, past and present, shows that man has always sought for communion with a divine power; and this experience has found its noblest expression in two main types of religion, monism and monotheism, Buddhism being the crown of the former, Christianity that of the latter' (p. 156).

The second thesis could be expressed by the title of the last chapter, Religion as Decision. Even at the very beginning of the book Mr. Gundry writes, 'And we must also remember that even a scholarly survey of the great religions will not automatically reveal to us the truth. At the end, just as all along, we shall be faced with the necessity of making up our own minds—of making a decision for ourselves' (p. 3). Decision is presented as the criterion of choice in religion. Decision is applicable in two ways: choice between religion and no religion and choice of one religion for oneself from among the existing ones. Regarding the first, one can choose not to be religious at all. 'There is a common view that the only intellectually honest approach to religion is to withdraw from it and consider it as one of many human phenomena' (p. 165). On the other hand if one decides to be religious, and one has to, considering the overwhelming evidence for the inevitability of religion—there are still alternatives. 'Either we are to decide which religion to adopt for ourselves or we are to make a composite religion drawing the best from each' (pp. 165-166). About those who make the latter choice, Mr. Gundry writes, 'Doubtless many who take this line are sincere; but they are certainly not being profound' (p. 165). They will never arrive at any decision at all, but 'will remain sitting on the fence of objectivity, until it rots beneath them, or is swept away by the storms of life' (p. 166). But he does not deny that objectivity has a place in religious decision. But at some stage we must pass from objectivity to subjectivity (pp. 165-169). Subjectivity the author sees as commitment. 'There must be commitment to a religion if religion is to yield up its treasures' (p. 166). While he shows up 'the folly of detachment', he points the reader to the imperative need of 'an unself-consciousness, a losing of oneself in religion, not as an academic abstraction, but as an activity'.

This is the place to speak about the intermediate thesis, which has already been mentioned. The problem of decision—according to the author's plan—has been 'accentuated by the study of the great religions'. To be sure man's religions give a united testimony for the truth of religion as such, for 'the religions of the world make an unwearying call away from complete trust in man to humility before the Reality which lies behind the universe' (p. 157). 'They all teach that "here we have no continuing city"' and invite us to see life *sub specie aeternitatis*. In spite of this united testimony, 'their answers, however, are different'. It is here that the comparative study of major religions of the world, under the classification of monistic and monotheistic religions, undertaken in Chapters V and VI become relevant. As has been indicated above, Buddhism represents the pinnacle of the monistic religions, as Christianity that of the monotheistic. The decision finally, according to the author, has to be made between these two. 'Of all the classical religions of the world only two are serious rivals for world's allegiance' (p. 110)—these two are Buddhism and Christianity. The problem of choice between monism and monotheism—which is really the only relevant problem in religions—is persistent through the latter part of the book, although often it is only implicit.

The author is, however, all through his arguments, particularly in the last chapter, careful to show that we are not helpless before the alternatives. Religious decision is not arbitrary. We do not have to commit ourselves unthinkingly to one or the other. Subjectivity is altogether independent of the objective; we need both. The objective method is the method of reason. Mr. Gundry observes, 'Christian theology, however, has on the whole respected the dictates of human reason, since it is our reason and our will that makes us what we are, human as distinct from sub-human beings. The monotheist believes that he is made in the image of God, and that consequently human knowledge is not misleading' (p. 161). This reviewer can only say with envy that Mr. Gundry is fortunate in possessing still so much faith in human reason, which he knows that many in our generation, including some influential theologians, have lost.

In sum, we should admit that Mr. Gundry's represents a very interesting approach to the problem of religion, and a not uncommon one. And he is commendably bold in leading the problem right down to the real focal point of decision, without going into platitudes and at the same time without seeming to be aggressive. He writes 'A personal answer to the question of Christ "Who say ye that I am?" is inescapable. Indecision is tantamount to denial' (p. 168). The objective of the book is praiseworthy, the conclusion to which the reader is challenged is acceptable: but there are scores of points which need clarification. There are many questions which arise in the mind of this reviewer, which will require a lot of space to deal with elaborately. But one observation which has to be made is that he has made his

arguments too reasonable to be convincing. However, though the specialist may raise his eyebrows in many places, no layman who reads this book can lay it aside without feeling that he has made some discoveries. And even the specialist will concede its relevance to the contemporary religious situation and to the situation of man as a whole.

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

B. F. PRICE

One's reflections on this new addition¹ to the recent succession of books devoted to the Theology of the Old Testament might well start from the author's words on p. 275: 'Not a trace should be allowed to remain of the conception, or rather, misconception, that the teaching of the Old Testament depicts a God quite different from the God of the New Testament.'

The fact that Dr. Vriezen mentions the possibility of such a misconception being held is an indication that he supposes that among his readers there may be some who are still attracted by the ancient heresy of Marcion. Irenaeus, it will be recalled, said of Marcion that he called the God of the Old Testament 'a worker of evils, delighting in wars, inconstant in judgement and self-contradictory.'² In distinction from, and superior to the God that made the world, Marcion speaks of the Father of Jesus. The Early Church refused to accept Marcion's distinction, but is there not a possibility that Christians in the twentieth century, particularly in a cultural environment so different from that of the sub-apostolic age as we find here in India, may be tempted to see in Marcion's answer the most convenient way out of a dilemma? Vriezen quotes the well-known dictum of Harnack: 'To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the Great Church rightly refused to make; . . . but that Protestantism since the nineteenth century should continue to treasure it as a canonical document is the result of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis.'³ The allowances which Harnack was evidently prepared to make for the Church of the early centuries is one which some might be willing to concede to the Church in the West, while asserting that the Church in India has no right to set the Old Testament on a pedestal which is not shared by equally ancient scriptures which have long formed part of the nation's religious heritage.

Dr. Vriezen describes the use of the Old Testament in the Church as 'one of the most urgent contemporary problems.'⁴ If this is so in Europe, we cannot afford to overlook it here in India

¹ Th. C. Vriezen: *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*. Basil Blackwell. 42s.

² Adv. Haer. I: xxvii.

³ p. 98, n. 1, citing Harnack: *Marcion*, p. 253.

⁴ p. 97.