

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

THE PHILOSOPHIC MYSTIC.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLOTINUS. By the Very Rev. W. R. Inge. Two Volumes. London: Longmans, Green & Co. 28s. net.

As we laid down these two volumes, so full of wise sayings and incisive criticism, we wondered whether Plotinus was more misunderstood by the writers of the past than Dean Inge is by his contemporaries. Lecky informs us that "Plotinus was so ashamed of the possession of a body, that he refused to have his portrait taken on the ground that it would be to perpetuate his degradation." The historian of rationalism is one of the most accurate of writers, and even he has not caught the true meaning of the action of Plotinus who, when asked to sit for his portrait, said: "Is it not enough to bear the image (*εἰδωλον*—the mere simulacrum of reality) in which nature has wrapped me, without consenting to perpetuate the image of an image, as if it were worth contemplating?" The contrast between the true and the alleged reason of the refusal is at once evident to any one who is acquainted with Platonic philosophy. The name of Plotinus has become familiar to all students of mystical literature. He was the philosopher of mysticism and the less one knew about him the greater he seemed to be. His sayings divorced from their context were quoted and at times they appeared to the ordinary reader to be mere word juggling of an unintelligible type. Yet we know that he influenced Augustine more than any other writer, and it is not too much to say that the great Christian philosopher learned from him that "God is spiritual, that true communion with Him is possible and that it is not to be reached by reasoning, but by holy living and trustful self-surrender" (Gwatkin, *Knowledge of God*, ii. 184).

Dean Inge has devoted nearly twenty years to the study of Plotinus, whose thought is by no means easy to follow, owing to the condensed style of his *Enneads*. The Dean openly professes himself to be not only an admirer and critic of the philosopher but also a disciple. This masterly exposition of the root conceptions of Plotinus is a proof of the affection with which the disciple regards his teacher, and few will read its pages without a deep regret that the Neoplatonist had not found his way to the Faith of Christ. From his writings he appears only to have been familiar with certain Gnostic misinterpretations of Christianity. We agree, however, with the contention that he must have known more than he has written. We feel that he had the mind naturally Christian, and are not surprised to learn that "from the time of Augustine to the present day, Neoplatonism has always been at home in the Christian Church." We are convinced that, of all the philosophies, Platonism is most at home in the Christian Church, and believe that Scholasticism, with its dependence on Aristotle, was largely responsible for the philosophical perversions that accompanied the growth of medieval accretions on the Faith of the Gospel.

Plotinus was a mystic and the philosopher of mysticism. When we say this we do not imply that mysticism is something that is extraneous to Christianity. Rightly understood, mysticism is an essential part of the teaching of Christ. The fact that prayer, direct communion with God, is possible, is a proof that without the foundation truth of mysticism our faith would not be a living working creed. Mysticism involves a philosophy and is at bottom a philosophy. Plotinus says: "Remember that there are parts of what it

most concerns you to know that I cannot describe to you; you must come with me and see it for yourselves. The vision is for him who will see it." Is not this exactly what the Christian preacher cries: "I cannot give you the experience which trust in Christ bestows. I can only lead you to Him. It is for you to find Him for yourselves."

The great problem of mysticism is to determine whether the vision is real or only the fruit of auto-suggestion and training. Those who are familiar with its literature know that much of what is written cannot stand at the bar of reason. Even the Lady Julian of Norwich—the sweetest of English mystics—has passages that are evidently the fruit not of her direct communion with God but the result of her Roman beliefs positing a reality that does not exist. God can be known directly. Of that there is no doubt, and students of Dr. Inge's volumes must feel that Plotinus in his mysticism gets into communion with the Eternal. For us Christians there must be a check on our mystical experiences, and it is precisely on account of its historical character that Christianity is safeguarded against the excesses of self-delusion. In the Gospel of St. John we find the exposition of the mystical side of our faith, and as Dr. Inge tells us in his Bampton Lectures: "It is true that the historical facts hold, for St. John, a subordinate place as *evidences*. His main *proof* is experimental. But a spiritual revelation of God without its physical counterpart, an Incarnation, is for him an impossibility, and a Christianity which has cut itself adrift from the Galilean ministry is in his eyes an imposture. In no other writer, I think, do we find so firm a grasp of the "psycho-physical" view of life which we all feel to be the true one, if only we could put it in an intelligible form."

It is impossible to condense the exposition of Plotinus as given by Dean Inge or to do justice to his modern interpretation of the philosopher. These Gifford Lectures owe much of their value to the extraordinary insight of their author into problems of the age. It is not too much to say that there is scarcely a modern or ancient philosopher of eminence whose opinions do not come under notice. At times we have been compelled to hunt up references and to find that the Dean has correctly interpreted what we had inaccurately grasped. Whether a passage from Hegel or Plato, Bergson or Augustine is quoted we are impressed at once by its appositeness and the incisiveness of the Dean's remarks. We find in the third century as laid before us a strange modernity and we do not think the lessons he draws from that period will be lost on his readers. Is it not true that "a thinker may be in advance of his contemporaries, but not of his age? The great man gives voice to the deepest thoughts of his own epoch." The Dean is not without hope of our future. "After Porphyry there was more sound philosophy in the Church than in the Pagan schools. Unhappily the time came when priestly tyranny destroyed the philosophy of religion, or drove it under the reign of scholasticism into bondage as the *ancilla fidei*. With the modern period, the emancipation of science and philosophy from religion began, and Europe retraced, in the diverse direction, the steps by which the independent science of Ionia developed at last into the Neoplatonic philosophy of faith and devotion." The severance was complete in the materialism and agnosticism of the nineteenth century; there are signs that the tide has now begun to turn again."

In his final reflections Dr. Inge, after describing the Neoplatonic philosophy as free of nearly all the religious difficulties that are caused by the age of science, proceeds: "There is a Christian philosophy of which the same might be said. There are Christians who believe in the divinity of Christ because they have known Him as an indwelling Divine Spirit; who believe that He

rose because they have felt that He has risen ; who believe that He will judge the world because He is already the judge of their own lives. Such independence of particular historical events, some of which are supported by insufficient evidence, gives great strength and confidence to the believer. But it does not satisfy those who crave for miracle as a bridge between the eternal and temporal worlds, and who are not happy unless they can intercalate 'acts of God' into what seems to them the soulless mechanism of nature. Christianity, however, is essentially a struggle for an independent spiritual life, and it can only exert its true influence in the world when it realises that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and when it stands on its own foundations, without those extraneous supports which begin by strengthening a religion and end by strangling it." "What does this mean? At first sight it appears to adopt the Modernist attitude to the facts of Gospel History and to waive them aside in favour of a conception of Christianity that makes them superfluous because they find no place in our experience. Is it a direct denial "of the claim which the Gospel makes to be a revelation of eternal truth through certain events of time?" We do not think from the study of Dean Inge's writings that he accepts the Modernist position. We believe that he has in his mind the miracle of Transubstantiation and other errors that are now so popular in circles where they are least expected to be found. Like all writers with the gift of clever epigram, Dean Inge forgets that his readers are impressed by thought ably presented from one point of view and are apt to misapprehend his real meaning. In spite of this defect which we have noticed on more than one page, we welcome this contribution to religious philosophy as one of the most striking expositions of thought essentially Christian that it has been our good fortune to read. His already great reputation as a fearless thinker is enhanced by this profound study, and in extenuation of our deliberate avoidance of any attempt to condense his exposition we can only say that he makes the task of a reviewer exceedingly difficult owing to the closeness of his writing and the absence of anything like verbiage in dealing with a complex subject. He has made Plotinus a living voice to us. He has transformed him from something little more than a name, into a man with a message that needs to be learned by the present age. He has wrestled with obscurities which he makes plain and he has justified the devotion of nearly a score of years to a philosopher who has been strangely neglected by professed students of the thought that is at the back of the philosophical system of St. Augustine. To understand the evolution of Christian doctrine it is necessary to understand Plotinus and we can now do this, thanks to these absorbingly interesting and extremely modern volumes.

T. J. P.

The appealing interest of discussions on the great events of the last four years when viewed in the light of prophecy is evidenced by the fact that a third edition of the reissue of the late Canon Edward Hoare's *Great Britain, Palestine, Russia and the Jews* is now published (C. J. Thynne, 1s. 6d. net). It has been brought up to date by the Rev. E. L. Langston, than whom no one is more fitted for the task. The Rev. C. C. Dobson's little book *God, The War and Britain* (C. J. Thynne, 1s. net) has gone into a second edition. Its purpose is to show that God is bringing good out of the evil and it breathes throughout a strong message of hope. *The Great Shaking* (C. J. Thynne, 1s. net) has as its opening words "The War is running its course to a divine time-table, and the key to this is to be found in the Bible," and this sentence indicates with sufficient clearness the purpose of the treatise. It will command the attention of prophetic students. *The Framework of Prophecy* by Cecil Orr (C. J. Thynne, 6d.) deals with "spiritual law in the natural world" and is described as "a primer for students."

TWO BOOKS ON HOME REUNION.

I

THE CHURCHES AT THE CROSS-ROADS. By the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, M.A. London: *Williams and Norgate*. 7s. 6d. net.

This is decidedly the most important contribution that has been made as yet to the discussion of the re-union of the Churches. Hitherto the Free Churches have seemed to take less interest than we could have hoped for, in this profoundly important subject. For instance, we remember that certain generous proposals, which were outlined in *The Church Times* not long ago, were coldly received by the Wesleyan Conference—the reply was that there did not appear to be, among Methodists generally, any widespread desire for reunion and there the matter ended. But Mr. Shakespeare's book, which has attracted a good deal of attention, serves to show that there are not wanting among nonconformists earnest souls who feel that the subject cannot be shelved—that our "unhappy divisions" weaken the Church of Christ—that they have a tendency to bring reproach upon her and that the time is rapidly drawing near—if indeed it has not already come—when they should be brought to an end. It has not always seemed, unless we are much mistaken, as if the Baptists were closest to the Church of England, and it is a hopeful sign either that we have misunderstood them or that a change of feeling is taking place among them, when a leading Baptist minister puts forth such a remarkable eirenicon as this and we can assure him that the great body of Churchpeople, clerical and lay, view his position and his pronouncement with prayerful sympathy.

In his opening chapter Mr. Shakespeare proceeds to show the senses in which we are at what he terms "the Cross-Roads," indicating three of the social problems which press upon the modern Church and he goes on to remark upon the regrettable fact that "the Church does not count for so much to-day as it once did," and that "a general weakening of faith and conviction has acted as a solvent upon its influence." There can be no doubt that it is true, as he says, that "the Church is no longer in the centre of the stage. Preaching and praying do not count for so much to the statesman when he reckons up the forces with or against his policy. The discussion of a sacrament, or of a form of Church polity, will never again be a national event of the first magnitude. The Church is not so much beset as disregarded." He goes on, however, to show that there "must be a place for the Church in the new world" and to indicate what he terms the supreme function and true objective of the Church. He shows, as we might expect, a wide acquaintance with past and present modes of thought and expression and he sums things up in a graphic and lucid way—as for example where he speaks of Mr. H. G. Wells (whom he aptly describes as "scribe to the spirit of his generation") and his opinions, as expressed in *God the Invisible King*—"His theology has no validity. It rests entirely upon his own experience and its weakness is that he has invented it!"

Mr. Shakespeare's programme for the Church (and he explains that he uses the term in the widest sense) is no narrow one. She must have the passion of conviction, understand the attitude and temper of the time, take part in solving the ills of society, transcend Nationalism and as a militant Church engage in an offensive and take the field, and he shows how in the past the Church has renewed her life when she has "got back to Christ and drunk of the original springs." He outlines the history of the Free Churches in this country and gives some statistics. He feels that "the process of time has softened the emphasis upon the things that divide" and that the Free

Churches " are coming to see that infinitely more important than to maintain lines of separation in doctrine which have been obliterated or weakened, is to bring together those who share the same conception of the Christian faith." The gain and loss of denominationalism are discussed very fully and frankly. To quote as we should like to do is impossible—we hope our readers will study the book—but we must at least record Mr. Shakespeare's expressed conviction that " the Free Churches can never make their full impact upon the life of the nation while they are split up into sections." He reveals somewhat of the inner life of nonconformity when he tells us that their most gifted young men are more and more " unwilling to risk what the Free Church ministry has to offer," and again that their divisions are " disquieting and repelling." He gives some distressing, but probably by no means unique, examples of overlapping—the cost of which, he says, " cannot be expressed in statistics." Every page of the book is alive with interest for all who feel the importance of the subject but undoubtedly the most significant chapters are those towards the end of the book. After discussing at some length, and with his customary courage and candour, the proposals for the Federation of the Free Churches he proceeds to face the larger question of the reunion of the Evangelical Free Churches with the Church of England. He does not consider federation practicable here, and sees " no middle way between the present separation and corporate reunion." Here again we find his courage does not fail him and he boldly maintains his conviction that " reunion will never come to pass but upon the basis of episcopacy." Elsewhere he declares that " to seek any other basis but episcopacy is a pure waste of time." He feels that there might be a recognition of *the fact* while at the same time there might be, as there are, differences of opinion as to *the theory*, and he argues this point with characteristic force. This is, as he himself recognizes, " the crux of the whole problem of reunion." He has gone further, we venture to think, than any leading nonconformist divine has hitherto travelled and he has incurred the wrath of some of the Free Church journals. But we feel that he, at least, will be undaunted in his advocacy of the splendid cause he has espoused and we are grateful to him for having given us a volume which is instinct with a passionate desire for Christian Unity. Scattered through these pages are some brilliant descriptive touches. Dr. Jowett's former Church in Birmingham is " the Vatican of Independency." Dr. Scott Lidgett is " a loyal Wesleyan, but he has not a shred of sectarianism in his nature." Dr. F. B. Meyer is " a united Free Church of England in himself." Mr. R. J. Campbell " has a genius for friendship as well as for preaching." Bishop Talbot—" a statesman, a born ecclesiastic." These are some of the lightning sketches which illuminate this academic discussion.

REUNION: A VOICE FROM SCOTLAND. By the Very Rev. James Cooper, D.D., D.C.L. London: *Robert Scott*. 3s. net.

From Mr. Shakespeare, we turn to Dr. Cooper, who gives us in these pages the text of the two addresses he delivered in London in the spring of 1918. Dr. Cooper was, in 1917, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and occupies the Chair of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Glasgow. He deals with but one aspect of the subject, namely that of reunion between the Presbyterians and the Church of England—a proposal which, as Mr. Shakespeare fully recognizes, is not without its own distinctive difficulties. Dr. Cooper's argument from history shows that there is precedent for a combination of the main features alike of the Presbyterian and Episcopal systems. It is a long story but, needless to say, it is well told and it certainly

affords an illustration of the way in which we who are not up against the politics and passions of the seventeenth century, might "find a way whereby the differences between Anglican Episcopacy and Scottish Presbytery might be bridged and reconciled through the free and voluntary action of the Churches themselves."

The second of the addresses was delivered in St. Faith's Chapel, in the Crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral and it sets forth the possibilities of closer relations between the Church of England and the Presbyterian Churches. Not that Dr. Cooper would rest content with merely "closer relations"—these he says "must be simply a stage towards the one right relation of a sound and acceptable union." He believes that "it is quite possible for Presbyterians to accept the Historic Episcopate without surrendering thereby any essential feature of their own system." Such action would not be either prejudicing or subverting that system, but rather "supplementing, completing and enriching it." In some Chapels we believe that ordination is nothing more than a mere recognition of the choice of that particular community or congregation but with Presbyterians it is much more and ordination is ministered with as great care as in our own Church. This ought to simplify matters considerably. It is refreshing to read that in Scotland this is "no longer the vision of a few" and that is "receiving more and more attention every day." We are grateful to Dr. Cooper for yielding to the pressure that was brought to bear upon him to induce him to send forth these valuable addresses.

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In conclusion a few observations may not be out of place. The larger question of the reunion of Christendom is of course outside the scope of these two volumes. The question indeed is full enough of difficulty without introducing a further consideration, which for the present at least seems to be outside the range of practical politics. However Dr. Cooper is probably right in saying that if home reunion became an accomplished fact "it would give us some right and power to go forward to the greater work of holding out the olive-branch to all the rest of Christendom." Since both these writers are at one in recognizing the improbability of any organic union apart from the acceptance of Episcopacy, it follows that the verdict of nonconformists generally will be more anxiously watched for than any pronouncements on the part of Churchmen of any school of thought. It is a time, then, for prayer that all who profess and call themselves Christians may in this important matter, have "a right judgment."

S. R. CAMBIE.

MR. HARDY'S "CATHOLIC CHURCH."

A VISION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. By Rev. T. J. Hardy, M.A. London :
Robert Scott. 4s 6d. net.

We must give Mr. Hardy credit for having managed to introduce a very considerable amount of extreme teaching into his collection of but fourteen sermons. He somewhat viciously attacks persons from whom he differs. He pronounces this elegant opinion of the religious work which has been going forward at the Front—"Is it the eviscerated religion of the accommodationists? the non-miraculous faith of a sublimated Creed and an invertebrate Church?" Why did he ask the question if it should receive a negative reply for he tells us on the same page that it is "the old religion of the Cross, the Mass, the Confessional, that is helping our brave fellows out there to fight, and die. That is what men are longing for and to that they will submit when it is offered to them plainly." We should have supposed that submission

would not be difficult to secure if they were really longing for it! We are told that men are being offered "a creed that will not offend the sickly stomachs of a few 'Varsity dons," that the members of Convocation are "elegant triflers" while he speaks of the Bishops as "the academic gentlemen who throng the Episcopate" and he wants them to be "given a few hours in the trenches." It is a pity if Mr. Hardy has not been in the trenches himself or visited the Front, as the writer happens to have done, for he might have modified some of his censorious pronouncements. But really this kind of thing is not very edifying, it cannot be considered convincing nor is it in good taste. It is unworthy of the best traditions of the Church of England pulpit.

But this is not all. We find a sermon entitled "Ave Maria" and in it an exhortation to us to lay "at the feet of our Lady" the devotion of our hearts and this is to find expression in the recitation of the "Hail Mary!" of the Roman devotions to the Virgin. This is rather audacious! His teaching on Purgatory is thoroughly Roman. He advocates prayer for the departed "that they may be loosed from their sins," and he bids us "raise our eyes anew to the Saints and address to them our prayers." Quoting St. Paul's words—"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross" he has the temerity to add—"of course St. Paul meant the Crucifix." In a sermon on Intercessory Prayer at Mass (*sic*) he speaks of "the Altar *whereon* (the italics are ours) is the Real Presence of the Saviour." Enough has been said to show the unsatisfactory character of this book. Mr. Hardy must have read some Church history and know what the doctrinal standards of the Reformers really were. He must surely know that the Crucifix was not in use among primitive Christians and that even the Cross is not found in the Catacombs before the fourth Century. With the history of our Church in mind and her formularies in our hand we can only say that we are amazed and saddened to read much that Mr. Hardy has written in these pages.

A YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE.

THE THREE KINGDOMS. A Young People's Guide to the Christian Faith.
By the Rev. F. G. Goddard, M.A., B.D. London: Macmillan & Co.
3s. 6d. net.

It is refreshing to turn from Mr. Hardy's pro-Roman sermons to this little volume, to which the Bishop of Liverpool contributes a Preface. It has been written by the Vicar of All Saints', Stoneycroft, in "odd moments" at the Front and there are several touching anecdotes which reveal the writer even more than the excellent instructions which he has packed into these pages. Mr. Goddard is not ashamed of the word Protestant and he is careful to point out that—"it is not merely negative but stands for the greatest *positive* truth of our religion—the all sufficiency of Christ."

His counsels on the Commandments are both shrewd and sane. For instance on the Seventh for example, we have sound advice, most tactfully given on "going straight" and this is only characteristic of much else in the book. Fasting, he points out, is "not essential or compulsory in the Church of England," and he reminds us that she "does not forbid the fairly modern custom of Evening and non-fasting Communion." His remarks on non-communicating attendance and the use of wafers leave us in no doubt as to his position, but he is never provocative or vituperative when he touches upon disputed points. Our only fear is that the price may make it impossible for the Clergy generally to distribute this exceedingly useful manual among their Confirmation Candidates, and we can only express the hope that when the

present edition is exhausted and the cost of book-production has gone down somewhat, it may be found possible to issue a cheaper edition. Meanwhile we heartily commend the book to the Clergy and to parents who wish to instruct their children in the Christian Faith along the lines of the good old Church Catechism.

CREATION'S STORY.

FABLE OR FACT? By Captain S. Bramley-Moore, M.C., A.S.C. London :
E. J. Larby, Ltd. 1s. net.

In a pamphlet of fifty-five pages Captain Bramley-Moore has given us a really valuable treatise dealing with the creation of the earth, the antiquity of man and evolution. He quotes the words of an eminent Hebrew scholar that "the records of the prehistoric ages in Gen. i.-xi. are at complete variance with modern science and archæological research" and then proceeds to show the unsoundness of the assertion. Comparing the chronological order of Genesis with the data obtained from scientific research he concludes that the two have more points of agreement than of divergence. Whatever may be said on the question of authorship "one thing at least is certain, the Book stands—and ever will stand—an impregnable masterpiece." The chapter on the antiquity of man is of great interest and he takes the view that there is no evidence of the existence of man previous to the Great Ice Age and he supports it by a wealth of argument and illustration. He shows that that Age was not "an epoch of the remote past" but that "it took place within comparatively recent times." He quotes approvingly the conclusion of Sir Joseph Prestwich that "the Glacial Period together with Palæolithic man, came within 10,000 to 12,000 years of our own times," and lest it should be said that fresh evidence may have increased these "apparently low estimates" of man's antiquity he examines the geological data in some detail and with much care. The third part of the treatise deals with evolution and his arguments are able and convincing. He claims that modern scientific research corroborates the Bible story that all mankind can be traced back, not to a variety of species, but to one primitive racial unit; and his conclusion of the whole matter is that while "scientific theories with increase of human knowledge, must always be liable to constant change" it is not so with revealed religion. "The teaching of the Bible, adapted for all men, in all ages, is the unalterable Word of God, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." *Fable or Fact?* is just the book to place in the hands of those who are troubled with doubts about Creation's story.

Is Rome behind the War? is the title of a booklet of compelling interest by Mr. J. A. Kensit (Protestant Truth Society, 1s. net). The facts he adduces in support of his plea are most striking and show conclusively that the Vatican ought not to be allowed any place at the Peace Conference.

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Prebendary Denison's pamphlets are quite interesting reading. In one—*An Open Letter to the Bishop of London on Canonical Obedience*—he hits out quite heavily and cleverly about "Episcopal Expediencies," and demands "some fixed and intelligible principle on which such leading or government shall be solidly and consistently based." The demand is reasonable though we fear that the principle we venture to suggest should be acted upon, viz. *steady obedience to the law as it is* will not meet Prebendary Denison's approval. In his other pamphlet—*Life and Liberty and the Church*—he runs a tilt at Dr. William Temple's Movement. Both pamphlets are published by Mr. Robert Scott at 6d. each. What can be said for the other side of the Movement can be seen in a pamphlet *When the Church is Free* (S.P.C.K., 2d. net) which is issued as a Statement of Policy by the Council.