

Book Reviews

The Christian World Mission: by Dr. R. Pierce Beaver, M.A., Ph.D., Baptist Mission Press, 41a Lower Circular Road, Calcutta 16. Price Re.1/25.

This book contains the William Carey Lecture for 1957 which was delivered at Serampore during January 1957 by Dr. Beaver, Professor of Missions and Director of Centre for the Study of the Christian World Mission, Federated Theological Faculty, University of Chicago. It is an able and masterly introduction to the vast and complex subject: the reconsideration of the nature, motivation, objectives, principles and methods of the world mission.

Dr. Beaver divides his lecture into two parts. Part I deals with the external and internal factors necessitating a reconsideration of *The Christian World Mission*. This contains a most careful and clear analysis of the present situation pointing out: (1) that we are entering upon an age of world missions wherein many religions are simultaneously engaged in active propagation campaigning for the souls of men; (2) that we are living in an age of social, economic and cultural revolution on a world-wide scale; (3) that there is a world-wide outreach for a larger share for the goods of the world and for human rights; (4) that there is a community of worshipping and witnessing congregations of Christians, be they small or great, all over the world. All these factors call for a thoroughgoing re-appraisal of the nature, objectives and methods of the Mission of the Church as well as the preparation of a new Christian apologetic, bringing out more fully the implications for society of the Lordship of Christ and the Ministry of Reconciliation committed by the Lord to His Church.

In Part II Dr. Beaver deals with the theological task in the present situation, pointing out at the very outset that 'the Apostolate is not the vocation of the office-bearing clergy only, but of the entire Christian community which is intended to be the evangelistic body'. It is for the performance of the Apostolate that God has placed the Church in the world. This Apostolate is discharged by parishes and congregations through the three essential functions of worship, fellowship and proclamation of the Gospel. It is in this section that the parish priest and the minister will find many fruitful suggestions as to how the worshipping, ministering and preaching Church can

witness to and experience the Lord's resurrection, dominion and power of His reconciling love.

Calcutta

BASIL MANUEL

Christianity and Economic Problems: by D. L. Munby. Macmillan & Co., 1956. Pp. 290. 25s.

The book begins with a 'short survey of the main doctrines of the Christian faith'. They are, to the author who is an economist, 'the foundation of my thinking'. God the Creator, Man the sinner, the Incarnation of Christ, the Church in the World, the End-event-Starting with these foundation beliefs, the author goes on to develop 'the Christian view of society'. The revelation in Christ of God's purpose for the world is the clue to a true understanding of the nature of man in his relation to the material world, nature and property and of his life in society and State. Munby sums up the theological part of the book thus: 'I have tried to illustrate very briefly and all too dogmatically, how from Christian doctrine about the nature of man we can draw some conclusions about the social ethics appropriate to such a creature. The social principles are general, their application is unsure, they provide no certain guide to a changing world. But they are not entirely useless. And if we can sum them up in any way, it is in the phrase "People matter". If we hold fast to the fact that people matter, and matter, not because of any inherent value we may find in them, but because God made them and saved them, then we will find a clue through the maze of the world.'

From here on, the author attempts to explicate the nature of economics as a science and of the presuppositions underlying the thinking of economists. Surveying the thought of the classical economists, Munby shows clearly how obvious errors were introduced into economic science by their utilitarian, individualistic and rationalist presuppositions. He says: 'It is dangerous to belittle the triumphs of the industrial system as it developed under the guise of capitalism. But it would be no less stupid to fail to point out how the economists of the nineteenth century were often blinded to some of its more obvious defects, and how their biased presuppositions hid from their attention facts that were open to all.'

Why could not Christian thinking correct these wrong presuppositions in this period? Munby raises this question and shows how the Christian protest against capitalism did not have much influence on the course of either economic thought or economic life because Christians lacked 'appreciation of many aspects and in particular the economic aspects of the social order, which they rightly criticized'. This inability to grapple with the technical aspects of economic life followed the social thought of the Christian socialists and others like a curse. (Even today a

‘major prophet’ of the stature of V. A. Demant, says Munby, shows this inability to understand and appreciate the facts of economic life. The author gives in an appendix to the book a critical review of Demant’s *Religion and the Decline of Capitalism*. The main burden of the criticism is that the book is based on a misunderstanding of the facts of the modern economic order. One has the feeling that theologically Munby owes a great deal to the Christendom group of Anglican social thinkers against whom he rebels. Perhaps Munby may help the group to realize the creative aspects of industrial expansion and thus save its thinking from becoming more and more irrelevant to the economic realities of a Welfare State. This is by the way.) Even the thinking of the Stockholm, Oxford and Amsterdam ecumenical conferences of this century on economic life has suffered from lack of knowledge of the technical aspects of modern economics.

To sum up. Modern economic thought has suffered on the one hand from the economists’ wrong conceptions of man and the world and on the other from the Christians’ misunderstanding of the technical aspects of economics in an industrial society. Munby says: ‘The experts (the economists) and the prophets (Christian thinkers) unfortunately never or rarely met; neither read each others’ works; each failed to get the benefit they could have obtained from the complementary achievement of their colleagues. If experts who fail to see the wood for the trees prove dangerous guides, prophets who do not talk about a real situation produce mere emotional verbiage’. At this point, the reviewer would like to say that if ever the Indian Church is to be able to make its contribution to the social philosophy emerging in modern India, we must take our lesson from this experience of the Church’s failure in the past and provide opportunity for down-to-earth experts (economists, sociologists and politicians) to meet with theologians and prophets. This is perhaps *the* task before organizations like the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society. I have digressed.

The rest of Munby’s book is a *meeting* of the expert and the theologian in the author. He deals with several particular economic problems which are crucial in the modern world, and shows the relevance of Christian insights in dealing with them. The problems taken up are ‘illustrative of the sort of economic issues that will have to be faced and of the kind of relevance Christian insights can provide’. This part is no doubt difficult reading, perhaps both for economists and theologians, especially for theologians. Inevitably so because it is an attempt at a meeting between theology and economics. But theologians who want to relate theology relevantly to economic life and economists who desire to be Christian in their economic thought must grapple with the writing of one who seeks to break the deadlock between the Church and the world, and not without success. Wealth and poverty, full employment and inflation, the price system, the place of the businessman, the workers’ organizations,

State action in the economic field, international scene—these indicate the issues that are dealt with. Munby concludes with a statement of Christian principles for modern economic life. Among Christian moralists, statements of Christian principles are easily made without due appreciation of the economic and moral realities of the situation. The statement of Munby is realistic. Certainly it cannot be the final word ; it is, however, a contribution to ecumenical thought on Christian social ethics.

The significance of Munby and his book is enhanced by the fact that he speaks from within the ecumenical movement and represents the best in it. He was a key figure in the Commission on Responsible Society in the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches. And he continues to give a lead to the World Council.

Trivandrum

M. M. THOMAS

Amos : by T. C. Witney, M.A., and B. F. Price, M.A., B.D.
(The Christian Students' Library, No. 10, C.L.S., Post Box 50,
Madras 3. Re.1/12.)

This is an excellent book for theological colleges, better still for those who appear for Serampore degrees as external candidates. Its language is easy and simple. The subject-matter is clear and direct. For its size, the book contains amazingly useful and helpful material by way of background, history and commentary.

Both the authors deserve a mention. The late Rev. T. C. Witney came out to India as a missionary under the London Missionary Society and worked for several years in Salem area. He later joined the staff of the Tamilnad Theological College at Tirumaraiyur. While working there he wrote this book on *Amos*. But before he could revise it, he was called to his eternal reward. The work of revision and bringing it up to date was entrusted to Rev. B. F. Price of Serampore College. Mr. Price is Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature on the staff of Serampore ; as such, he is eminently qualified to do the task. Mrs. Price has added a helpful map of the Holy Land with its neighbouring nations and their chief cities.

The book has three main divisions :—

I. *General Introduction*. I consider this portion useful and important as it acquaints the reader with necessary historical background, thus preparing him to a proper understanding of the prophecy of *Amos*. In fact, this section is packed with useful material which requires careful study and digestion.

II. *Introduction to Amos*. In this section the authors deal with subjects like the authorship of the book of *Amos*, its date and message. They have summed up the message of *Amos* under three subdivisions :—

- (a) Man's Injustice and God's Justice.
- (b) False Gods and True God.
- (c) Man Proposes and God Disposes.

This section closes with an analysis of the book and a chronological table beginning with King David to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

III. *Commentary.* This forms the final and major portion of the book covering roughly seventy pages out of a total of ninety-eight. Throughout this section, a few verses of the text are printed at the top of each page in heavier type with the relevant commentary below. This makes the study convenient and easy for the reader. It is further made easy as questions of text and interpretation are explained in non-technical language. At the same time, it is made richer by giving references to relevant passages in earlier books of the Old Testament and later writings. Mr. Witney's long acquaintance with the religion and language of the South has well equipped him to explain the message of *Amos* in an Indian setting wherever possible.

The authors have ably brought out the meaning and message of *Amos* not only as it confronted the people of those bygone times, but as it equally applies to us living in this day and generation. The message is a challenge to the Church everywhere for a real introspection. Because of a peculiar coincidence in history and of social upheavals in India at the moment, it becomes urgent for the Church in India to study this book afresh with a new vision so that the Church will be in the forefront of divinely-inspired social reformations in the country.

Though this book was primarily written for students in Theological Colleges, yet it is presented in such a fashion that it will be a great asset to Bible and Sunday School teachers, as well as the private study of the Clergy and Laity.

Avanigadda

C. DEVASAHAYAM

Hebrews—Introduction and Commentary : by A. B. Elliott, M.A., D.D. (The Christian Students' Library, No. 11, C.L.S., Post Box 501, Madras 3. Re.1/75.)

In reviewing any new addition to the books already published in the Christian Students' Library series it is necessary to judge the book on the basis of the purpose that it is intended to fulfil, rather than on any mere estimate of its scholastic soundness. There are no doubt points of exegesis in Bishop Elliott's commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which some New Testament scholars would wish to challenge, but the present reviewer would not presume to enter into any of these scholastic questions. The author himself has acknowledged his own indebtedness to men who are masters in the field of New Testament scholarship,

and whose works are already available to the student who can read in English.

But what of the class of Bible student for whom this series is primarily intended: the village evangelist, the Biblewoman, the intelligent Indian layman of an urban or rural congregation, the village schoolmaster who perhaps aspires to be a lay preacher? Have we here a book that can be readily translated into the Indian vernaculars and placed in the hands of such people with the sure knowledge that it will meet their need and answer their questions, when they have not always near at hand a teacher at whose feet they can sit?

From some slight experience of seeking to give Biblical introduction and exposition to men and women of this kind our own conviction is that it is hardly an ideal book for this purpose.

In the first place what one looks for in the Introduction to a commentary of this kind is something such as that which Miss Alice Parmelee has produced in 'A Guidebook to the Bible'. Her chapter on the Prophet Amos, for example, begins: 'It was feast day in Bethel, and the city streets were filled with people on their way to the Temple to offer sacrifices'. Here is a vivid picture, which at once captures the attention and kindles the imagination. The reader will read on; and then proceed, with understanding enlightened by the fruits of sound scholarship, to read the book to which he has thus been introduced. This, one must admit, the bare scholastic bones of the introduction to this commentary, however, 'anatomically' sound they may be, will quite fail to do. In our opinion the writer has not succeeded sufficiently in getting away from the theological classroom and out into the village; and that is a pity. It is also a pity that the book has been marred by some careless proof-reading.

In the commentary itself it would have been helpful if each of the main sections had been introduced by a digest of the argument of the whole section. Thus the reader would have been more readily able to keep before him the thread of the thought of the epistle as he went along.

One fears such references as that on page 10 to 'the fancies and falsities of Gnosticism' will be quite incomprehensible to the type of reader we have in mind, when neither in the Introduction nor in the Commentary itself is there any explanation of who the Gnostics were or what they believed.

When all this has been said, however, we do not doubt that the Commentary will be studied with much profit by numbers of people, who will be thankful that it has been produced. Nevertheless there is great doubt as to how many of these will be the kind of people, to meet whose need this series was originally planned. But for this, no doubt, the Editor must bear his due share of the responsibility.

Subjectivity and Paradox—A Study of Kierkegaard—by J. Heywood Thomas. Basil Blackwell. 18s.

The Rev. J. Heywood Thomas will be known to readers of the *Scottish Journal of Theology* through his article on 'Kierkegaard and Existentialism' (December, 1953), and now we have his book *Subjectivity and Paradox—A Study of Kierkegaard*, published in February, 1957.

In his introductory chapter he emphasizes the point that Kierkegaard sought to answer the question: What does it mean for me to become a Christian? and follows with the statement 'Kierkegaard's work might almost be said to be a locus classicus for studying the main problem of philosophy of religion, which is that of understanding the nature of religious faith'. That is the main theme of the book; and the writer finds in Kierkegaard's themes of subjectivity and paradox considerable help in understanding the nature of religious faith.

We are introduced to this study by a background chapter on Hegel's philosophy of religion; so that Kierkegaard's famous challenge that Truth is Subjectivity can be seen in its proper perspective. This leads to the discussion in the middle chapters of the book of Kierkegaard's concept of the paradox of faith. This is where the study really begins to get interesting. Belief in the paradox centres on Kierkegaard's understanding of the doctrine of the Person of Christ as the Absolute Paradox. To Kierkegaard the coming of Christ is a paradox; for his contemporaries it lay in the fact that He is truly Man, who spoke like them and followed their habits and customs, and yet is truly God. For later generations the paradox is different for it is easier to imagine Him as the Son of God, and yet how could He be as He adopted the habit of mind of a particular age. So for Kierkegaard, 'the truth about Him, says faith, is that, contrary to all appearance, He was God', and so the paradox exists only for faith. This leads to Kierkegaard's faith-relation contemporaneity, which means that if we have faith in Christ, then we are contemporary with Him no matter to what age we belong. Thus the writer links Kierkegaard with the emphasis in contemporary theology which speaks of the nearness of Christ.

In the last chapter the writer sums up his work in estimating Kierkegaard's present importance in philosophy of religion, and how far certain essential points about religious faith, which the writer summarizes, can even be expressed in terms of the contemporary linguistic method in philosophy.

In summary they read as follows:—

Faith is not proof; the rebuttal of the empirical error; religious faith as the answer to a limiting question; the insistence on the inclusion of the Person; and lastly the clue to the meaningfulness of religion.

In this last section the writer attempts to show that what Kierkegaard really meant by faith can be understood best by

means of the techniques used in modern philosophical linguistic analysis. There is no need to hold up Kierkegaard as the leader of a great existentialist attack on the modern philosophers, for he can provide material for a reply to any denial of the meaningfulness of religious language. If this is true then here is a work that deserves praise for an attempt to come to terms with a radical split in the conversations between certain modern philosophers and theologians, in the light of the work (again a strange paradox) of one of the most revolutionary voices in modern Christian thought.

Calcutta

W. S. REID

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THE GREAT FESTIVITY

*Come, O my Christ, be we sitting or lying
Together, both of us, laughing and crying!
Day of this several 'I' and 'Thou'
Pass to its final setting now!
Thus in this flesh if it may not be,
What reckoneth then this flesh to me?
Once to be rid of it, brave and free,
'Twere the day of a great festivity!
Where hearts are one, I, Dāsa, declare,
None reckoneth aught of 'here' or 'there'.*

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Book Notice

A *Village Service Book*: Bishop Philip Loyd. *Publishers*—S.P.C.K. (Copies obtainable from S.P.C.K., Post Box 1585, Kashmere Gate, Delhi 6, and Post Box 501, Park Town, Madras 3.) Price 50 nP. 1956.

The foreword to the book says, 'The Services contained in this book are translated from a small book published . . . for the Marathi-speaking village congregations . . . where they are still in use.'

The author from long experience with village Christians knew well their difficulties in using elaborate worship forms. 'The Preface to the Marathi edition' (translated), and 'An Indian Village Service Book' which are appended to this booklet reveal the author's 'understanding of the needs and capacities for worship of simple folk and the principles which he followed in drawing up these Services'.

The book contains:—

1. Four Alternative Services for daily use.
2. A Memorial of the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, in four parts for use on four separate occasions.
3. A Service for offering of Gifts.
4. Alternative Psalms which may be used instead of those given in the Services.

The Services are simple, short and well arranged. The essentials to be observed in regular worship are carefully provided for. This book of worship should be of great value in conducting Services.

But a book of this type in English may not be widely used by English-speaking people as there are several standard Service forms in existence. However, the booklet may be considered a model for use by village folk. Therefore, translations of the book into different Indian languages will be welcome.

Sihora

JOHN VERGHESE