

Book Reviews

British Baptist Missionaries in India (1793-1837): The History of Serampore and its Missions: by E. Daniel Potts. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 276. Price 57s 6d.

The Christian missionary in India from overseas is now under a cloud. The palmy days of his authority and influence under the British regime are now gone beyond recovery. His presence in certain parts of India is suspect in the eyes of the government. While he is not unwelcome to the majority of Indians, thanks to our traditions of tolerance and hospitality, ultra-nationalists in sentiment will not be sorry at his total disappearance from the country. The question of the future of the missionary enterprise in India is currently engaging the attention of Christian conferences and assemblies in different parts of the world. In such a situation an enquiry into the origins, aims, ideals and development of the first generation of modern Protestant missionaries in North India can offer us many valuable lessons. These may suggest guidelines for the future or at any rate should give us the right historical perspective in which to look at present-day problems without undue passion and prejudice. The book under review may serve as an excellent guide to such an historical study.

There are two important landmarks in the history of the modern Protestant missionary enterprise in North India. The first is the arrival in Calcutta in 1793 of William Carey and the other is the death in 1837 of Joshua Marshman, the last surviving member of the famous Serampore trio. Referring to the latter event the author says that it 'marked the end of an epoch for after it the mission . . . ceased to exist as an independent and widely influential enterprise' (p. 21). The book gives a fascinating picture of the Serampore mission between these two dates, tracing in vivid colours the story of the beginnings, the development and the achievements of the mission during this period. It also contains fine cameos of several of the pioneer British missionaries as well as of a few men who occupied important roles in the public life of British India during these decades.

The chief merit of the book is that it seeks to place the Serampore mission in the perspective of the history of the Church in India as well as of the modern ecumenical movement on the one hand, and of the history of the British regime in India on the other. In doing this the author has removed

several illusions connected with certain historical figures known to us. Not a few books have been written on Carey and the Serampore mission in which hero-worship or partisanship has got the better of the sense of proportion which ought to have guided the authors. This book is not a Baptist 'hallelujah' to William Carey's work but a critical evaluation of the achievements of the Serampore mission in which Carey, of course, played a leading part. It is refreshing to find that, while Carey is given his due place of honour, the contributions made by Marshman and Ward to the building up of the mission is fully recognized. For example, the author makes it clear that Joshua Marshman played a significant role in the founding of Serampore College and that William Ward, as the author of the *Account of the Writings, Religion and Manners of the Hindoos*—despite its many flaws—and in other ways, was able to build up on a sound footing the public relations of the mission. The statement of the author that Carey, Marshman and Ward 'fully complemented one another' is not one that can easily be challenged. The author corrects a misconception regarding the abolition of *Sati* when he says 'the credit for the final act, in the indisputable words of Edward Thompson, is almost entirely personal, and it is Bentinck's' (p. 154). However, it is but just to recognize that though the efforts of Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore added much to the tempo of the movement against *Sati*, 'Missionaries in general and Baptists in particular were among the first to start the agitation for the abolishment which eventually came' (p. 155).

Of particular interest in this ecumenical age is the author's treatment of the relations of the Baptist missionaries to other Christian groups working in India at that time. 'There is ample evidence in missionary archives', says the author, 'to show that the Baptists' beliefs on baptism and church government did not prevent "cordial co-operation or . . . sympathy" with other church groups' (p. 58). 'All the world knows now of Carey's proposal, characterized as "the most startling missionary proposal of all time", that once in about 10 years a meeting should be held at the Cape of Good Hope of all Protestant missionary organizations—a prophetic vision realized in 1910 in Edinburgh. There will be a general endorsement of the view expressed by the author in the following words, "In the long run, probably the most important effect of the trio in India with regard to inter-Christian relations lies in their influence in propagating the very idea of the need for closer co-operation" (p. 61).

The author has portrayed for us in lively colours the Serampore mission in its manifold operations embracing such diverse fields as evangelism, education, Bible translation and social reform, and in the process has corrected many a distortion of facts or misinterpretation of events or imbalance of the assessment of personalities. It is well documented on every page

and the bibliography at the end of the book runs into 20 pages of close print.

The last of the four sections into which the book is divided deals with the Indian response to the missionary enterprise. This chapter is worthy of study by both Christians and non-Christians. This section deals with such interesting topics as methods of missionary work, obstacles which stood in the way of acceptance of Christianity by Hindus, the Christian attitude to caste and social customs and the principle of identification of foreign missionaries with Indian culture. There is much in these pages that could be of service to the Church in India both as a warning and as a source of inspiration.

All unbiased observers would give their assent, surely, to the two propositions indicating the author's final assessment of the Serampore mission. They are as follows:

- (1) The pioneers connected with the Serampore mission were the 'architects and builders of a richer, broader concept of missionary work, and they . . . laid the foundations for the modern Christian mission' (p. 245). The broad pattern they set 'embraced within its scope medicine, agriculture, education and social reform'.
- (2) 'The real revolution in nineteenth-century Indian society was the result of both the work of missionaries and the Indian reformers' (p. 244).

This second point will carry conviction with most students of Indian renaissance, but perhaps especially because of the restraint the author observes in stating his case.

We are happy to welcome this scholarly contribution to definitive and apologetic literature connected with Christian missions in India. It should serve as an eye-opener to critics of missions, Christians and non-Christians alike—including those who wield power and influence at the present time in government circles in India. We believe that the book will remain for long an authoritative volume on the history of the Serampore mission. We recommend that it should find a place not only in the libraries of theological seminaries but also in all institutions interested in cultural links between the East and the West.

Tiruvalla.
Kerala

C. E. ABRAHAM

The Theology of Chenchiah: by D. A. Thangasamy, with selections from his writings. C.I.S.R.S. and Y.M.C.A., 1966. Pp. 329. Price Rs.7.50.

Students of Indian Christian Theology are under a debt of gratitude to Mr. D. A. Thangasamy for this presentation of the work of the late Pandipeddi Chenchiah. Mr. Thangasamy is already well known as an authority on Chenchiah, and has

published illuminating articles on his theology in the *South India Churchman* and *Religion and Society*. Now this new book, published jointly by the Y.M.C.A. and C.I.S.R.S. as the first in a series entitled *Confessing the Faith in India*, gives us an opportunity of assessing the work of Chenchiah on the basis of a comprehensive selection of his writings, which have for years lain inaccessible in the files of the *Guardian* and other papers.

First comes a short but vivid and informative biographical introduction and then Mr. Thangasamy gives us Part I of the book, which consists of his own 53-page summary of Chenchiah's thought on such basic topics as Christology, the New Creation and the relation of Christianity and Hinduism. Mr. Thangasamy intends to give a presentation rather than a critique of Chenchiah's position, and so this section consists largely of quotations from Chenchiah's writings, with a running commentary. It is a very fair and useful introduction to Chenchiah's work. In his final section on 'The Significance of Chenchiah' (pp. 48-53) Mr. Thangasamy draws our attention to the way in which Chenchiah anticipated many of the emphases of modern radical theology in the West. He always stressed the need for direct experience (*anubhava*) of Jesus, but this was no narrow, purely personal experience. Rather it was an experience which sought and found expression in bringing about a changed and renewed world, as Thangasamy points out:

'The experience that Chenchiah was talking about is something far nobler than an individualistic "experience of salvation" that revivalists often talk about. The experience that Chenchiah was talking about was that of being admitted by grace into the state of striving for oneness with God. Dynamic experience is possible only when there is a willingness to experiment not only in the narrow fields of faith-healing and the like, but also in the larger arena of life . . . The essence of the experiment and experience that Chenchiah was advocating . . . is the power of the Holy Spirit as a cosmic energy that is seeking to transform the races of man' (pp. 51-52).

As one who has made some study of Chenchiah, this reviewer is deeply grateful to Mr. Thangasamy for reprinting here several passages from Chenchiah which have not been easily available, notably that from the pamphlet *Christianity and Hinduism* (1928) on pp. 195-220. On reading a section like this one is impressed anew by the freshness and ebullience of Chenchiah's writing. For him 'nothing is obligatory save Christ' (p. 142), and the heart of the Christian faith consists in coming into living and active contact with that risen Christ who yet still retains the manhood which he assumed in the Incarnation. Hindu India longs for this kind of living contact, but the Church, Chenchiah feels, has failed to

demonstrate it. We have talked about the uniqueness of Christianity, but have failed to live it (p. 205). 'The Hindu' Chenchiah writes, 'wants to be in touch with the Logos which became Jesus—with the Holy Spirit which is the immanent Christ—rather than with Jesus of Nazareth' (p. 207). We can demonstrate this uniqueness of Christ only when we demonstrate a new spiritual power at work in us, for the Hindu looks for *realization*. And so we come to what Chenchiah calls the 'Yoga of the Holy Spirit'. 'The Holy Spirit is the universal Jesus', he writes, 'the energy beyond creation, which in Christ has flowed into the world . . . The Holy Spirit is the energy through and by which Jesus is going to recreate a new heaven and a new earth' (p. 217). What the Hindu needs is not the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but the very gift of it—a definite *sadhana*, practicable and practised (p. 218).

This is heady stuff, cosmic and yet earthy, and Thangasamy shows us clearly Chenchiah's connection with Bergson and Aurobindo, as well as his almost uncanny parallelism to the thought of his then unknown contemporary Teilhard de Chardin. There are anticipations also of much current 'dialogue' theology, such as that of Raymond Panikkar. In discussing the Christian claim to exclusive possession of the truth, for example, Chenchiah writes illuminatingly:

'If Christ is the truth, it follows to the Hindu way of thinking that He pervades Hinduism and Christianity alike. If He is the centre, He must be reachable from any point in the circumference. To the Semitic, truth is ethical, dividing the right from the wrong, good from bad. To the Hindu, truth is the support uniting the divisions on the surface. Have we tried to exhibit Christ as the basis of spiritual life, as the bread of life, necessary and available to all?' (p. 209).

The reader will find here ample material on all the main emphases of Chenchiah's writing—Jesus as the *adi-purusha* of the New Creation; Christianity as the herald of a new creation of man and nature; the Holy Spirit as the *new* force entering from outside and enabling man to share in the newness of Christ; salvation as new life in the Spirit; the incarnation as no mere *avatar* but a new 'order of nature where God becomes the inner spirit of a species' (p. 282); the Kingdom of God as a real possibility on earth. And all through we are struck by Chenchiah's emphasis on *realization*: a belief is of value only when it produces changed men and a changed society.

The book has a fairly detailed Table of Contents, which indicates the scope covered in the various selections. It would, however, have been greatly improved by the inclusion of an index of names and subjects. A comprehensive bibliography, such as that contained in Herwig Wagner's book, would also have added to its value. It is good to know that the

I.C.T.A. hopes soon to publish Dr. Baago's exhaustive Bibliography of Indian Christian Theology, but one would hope that subsequent books in this series might carry at least a bibliography of writings mentioned in the text.

This review is not intended to present a critique of Chenchiah's thought, but rather to act as a stimulus to the student of theology—to read this book, and discover Chenchiah at first hand. It is a rewarding discovery, and Mr. Thangasamy is an experienced guide.

G.U.S.T.
Ahmedabad 6

R. H. S. BOYD.

The Authority of the Old Testament: by John Bright. S.C.M. Press, London. Pp. 272. Price 40s.

John Bright is no stranger to the students of Old Testament. His *History of Israel* has earned for him a wide reputation and acclamation as an excellent thinker and writer on O.T. subjects. The present work is another testimony to his love and concern for the O.T.

The book has five chapters. The author raises the issue of the authority of the O.T. and lucidly discusses the nature of authority, the classical solutions offered to the problem and the method of interpreting and preaching the O.T. from the Christian pulpit.

The Christian faces the O.T. with a dilemma. He can neither reject nor accept it because it presents him with instances of violence, immorality and with customs, attitudes and conceptions of God much less than Christian (cf. p. 15). In the history of the Church three solutions have been suggested to deal with this dilemma, to remove the O.T. from the Bible (Marcion's way), to find a Christian meaning in the O.T. texts (Church fathers), and to discern elements in the O.T. that have abiding validity in the light of a normative principle derived from the N.T. (Liberal Protestantism) (p. 110). But the author is not satisfied with the traditional solutions. He searches for the real authority of the O.T. According to him, authority is the power that resides in the Bible to compel conviction and create belief. The O.T. has no dead authority over belief. The Bible derives its authority from God. Its authority is linked with the authority of the Church. It should not be used in a mechanical way. It cannot be allowed to mean what each individual wants it to mean (p. 46). The key to its authority lies in its theology. The preacher's task, therefore, is to expound the text from its theological background. His exegesis should follow a grammatico-historical method, i.e. he should seek to understand the language of the text (grammar) in the light of the situation in which it was first written or spoken (history) (p. 169). Exegesis should be

theologically based and the message should be existentially relevant to the congregation. Existential approach does not mean the existentialist's approach, but it stresses the objective reality of the saving events of which the N.T. bears witness (p. 182).

In the final chapter, the principles of hermeneutics are illustrated. They are useful patterns for the preachers of the O.T. He pleads that both testaments should be preached to have the 'whole counsel of God' and for the building up of Christian faith.

A large list of selected bibliography is added at the end which offers ample opportunity to the inquisitive reader to pursue his interest in the subject.

The Authority of the Old Testament will help to dispel the air of suspicion, hesitation and dilemma of many Christians concerning the use of the Old Testament in the Church. To be convinced of the Old Testament's place in the Church one cannot afford to miss this valuable work.

Serampore College
West Bengal

K. V. MATHEW

St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History: by Helmut Flender. Translated by H. Reginald and Ilse Fuller. S.P.C.K., London, 1967. Pp. 179. Price 32s 6d.

There is renewed interest today in the critical study of the Lucan writings. Not only has the focus of New Testament studies been moving toward Luke-Acts, as C. K. Barrett has remarked, but in the process there has been a considerable shift in approach. One or two generations ago, scholars were concerned to a large extent with 'Luke the historian', while very little attention was given to his theology. E. P. Scott wrote in 1932, 'Of (theology in Luke-Acts) there is no real sign . . . He aims, apparently, at setting forth the Christian message apart from any doctrinal construction.' The situation today is entirely reversed. Hans Conzelmann's book, *The Theology of St. Luke* (1954), which has dominated Lucan studies along with Haenchen's studies on Acts, treats Luke above all as a theologian who has reshaped the primitive tradition in support of his post-apostolic theological reconstruction.

The present study stands in the latter tradition. The author agrees with the essential approach of Conzelmann at three crucial points, although modifying each in detail. First, Luke-Acts must be understood as post-apostolic writings which have the purpose of restating the *kerygma* for that situation. Second, the decisive problem for Luke was the delay in the Parousia. To meet the problem of a continued historical existence, instead of the immanent end of the world, Luke conceptualizes a 'redemption history' in three epochs: the period

of Israel before Jesus ; the mid-point of history in the ministry of Jesus ; and the period of the Church during which Christians both look back to the unique time of Jesus as the centre of history and forward to the end of history. And third, the methods of redaction criticism can be employed to lay bare the distinctive structure of Luke's theology.

Flender's study is a careful analysis of Lucan theology, tersely written to an extent which makes the style difficult to follow without constant reference to the Lucan texts, but fruitful and suggestive at every point. The author differs somewhat from Conzelmann in method. He attempts to construct Luke's theology both by analysis of Luke's use of the tradition as well as of his redaction (p. 9, note 1). As a result, Flender is able to offer a more satisfactory analysis of the structure of Luke, taking into account all the material in the final Gospel—tradition plus redaction.

The book has three major sections. The first (Chapter I) analyses the 'dialectical structure of Luke-Acts', discovering in the various kinds of parallelism which characterize Luke's writings the essential clue to his theology: 'On the one hand he preserves the real presence of the divine revelation without making it an objective, historical fact, while on the other hand he can describe the effect of the Christ event on the history (of the Church) without conferring on the latter a sacral character' (p. 20). In this way, Luke's structure itself provides the framework for his creative handling of the history-faith dialectic. The author tests his preliminary analysis in two further sections. He finds that the dialectical pattern is maintained in Luke's handling of the two main themes of his theological concern, the Christian message in the world (Chapter II) and the meaning of Jesus in (redemptive) history (Chapter III).

Perhaps the most suggestive part of the author's thesis lies in the place he assigns to Luke as a theologian in a missionary setting. Flender finds that in contrast to Paul, whose eschatology tends to make the old aeon (i.e. the secular, present age) meaningless, and to John, who tends to subordinate historical existence to an individualism of personal decision, Luke presents a theology of encounter. 'Thus Luke constructs a theology which maintains the created character of the world, while at the same time providing a theological answer to the problem posed by the fact that the redemptive event now lies in the past' (p. 165). 'He (Luke) discovers a *via media* between the gnostic denial and the early Catholic canonization of history' (p. 167). In short, Flender interprets Luke as a theologian for a secular age, thereby doing justice to both the *kerygmatic* and the apologetic elements in Luke's writings. A restudy of Luke's creative attempt to interpret the Gospel in dialectical terms to his age may indeed provide clues for modern theologians wrestling with the history-faith question in the context of today's secularity.

Some questions must be brought against the study. Does the author do justice to Paul and John? Did each—in different ways—in fact slight the dialogical character of the *kerygma*, as the author seems to imply, or did they only present a different kind of approach for the Gospel-world encounter while maintaining the essential history-faith dialectic of the *kerygma*? And does Luke in fact conceptualize the Parousia only as a far-distant event (p. 102)? Does not Luke rather, while coming to grips with the delay in the Parousia, still proclaim the nearness of the event (3:9, 17; 10:9, 11; 18:7; 21:32)?

The parish pastor will fail to discover direct homiletical help here; it is not that kind of book. Still the student of the New Testament will find this book a basic tool for examining Lucan theology. It is to be hoped that Flender's book can stimulate further study of the problem of proclaiming the Gospel in secular society and, eventually, bear fruit in more 'popular' form.

Gurukul Theological College
Madras

JAMES A. BERGQUIST

Christian Social Thought in India: by Bengt R. Hoffman.
C.I.S.R.S., Bangalore, in the Social Concerns Series, 1967.
Pp. 215. Price Rs.5 (hardcover Rs.7.50).

This is an edited version of a thesis written by 'a Swedish theologian of wide ecumenical experience' (in the words of Dr. Herbert Jai Singh's Foreword).

Though it has its moments, this is in general a disappointing book. We have come to expect high standards of anything produced by the C.I.S.R.S.—indeed for those concerned with social thought and action in India their publications are the essential starting-point. But this is, in my opinion, by far the least useful book so far produced in the Social Concerns Series.

In the first place, it is a difficult book to read. At best, the language is unnecessarily difficult and convoluted; at worst it descends into near jargon. Scan this thought, for example:

'The same formal or ideal themes will serve as our guides as we proceed to a consideration of the empirical salients corresponding to each of them. This approach to sociological realities will have a resemblance to the eschatological grasp in the realm of theology, and perhaps rightly so. Indian Christian Ethicists are living in a social situation which is in a special way illustrative of the symbiosis between the realized ideal, and the 'not-yet' in a Christian existence' (p. 15).

Or again, on page 30:

'We have noted the tension in the Indian Christian view of democratic parliamentary structures. He is devoted to the ideal but the necessary symbiosis between rule and exception makes for an ever-present and extremely pronounced 'quand-meme'—stronger than in most other Christian democrat ethical systems—which renders the answers significant and doubly moving. We can observe a similar situation in regard to socio-economic problems.'

Faced with this sort of thing—and in the first chapter—it is my impression that most readers will give up—except those who confuse verbal pyrotechnics with depth of thought, and, of course, conscientious reviewers, who will struggle on.

Struggle on I did, and my second impression is that even if more plainly translated into English the book is not a particularly profound treatment of the subject and certainly not worth the effort involved. I felt rather like the small boy who has laboriously unwrapped layer after layer of a large and exciting-looking parcel, only to find inside a small, useful, but utterly unexciting piece of clothing.

The book has five basic chapters: on Indian Democracy, Indian Socialism, Nationhood and Cultural Unity, the Role of the Church and the Procedure of Christian Ethical Thinking. Each of these (dejargonized) is a fairly workmanlike and useful summary of the thinking of the C.I.S.R.S. on these topics. The book seldom moves beyond the orbit of the writing and thinking of the C.I.S.R.S.—but this is not a serious criticism since this represents the 'mainstream' of Protestant and Orthodox social thought in India. However, I must record my overall impression that this book will not really meet the needs of either section of its potential readership: the general reader will find it daunting, while it is not sufficiently profound or logical to meet the needs of the serious theologian.

The E.S.I.I.
Durgapur 1

KENYON E. WRIGHT

One Man's Prayers: by George Appleton. S.P.C.K., London, 1967. Pp. 56. Price 3s 6d.

This is a very beautiful little book.

George Appleton was a missionary in Burma from 1927. During the war when driven out of Burma he was in India. After the war he returned to Burma and was there until independence, finishing up as Archdeacon of Rangoon. He then returned to England. From 1950 to 1957 he was Secretary of the Conference of Missionary Societies, a responsible post which brought him into the heart of the ecumenical movement. He was appointed Archdeacon of London in 1962, but shortly after

was elected Archbishop of Perth in Western Australia, where he still is.

Such is the outward record. This book lifts the curtain and lets us glimpse within. It reveals one who has studied the Bible, meditated and prayed, and in that power come through much conflict and suffering. He has been in the habit of distilling his study and meditation into short prayers. There are 106 of these and they form the bulk of the book. Each reveals a deep pondering of some words of Scripture and behind many lies some significant experience in his life. Some of these are indicated in his short introduction. Each prayer is a jewel, expressed in language worthy of the tradition of the Book of Common Prayer, flowing, rhythmic and balanced. We could use these prayers in many ways. By studying the underlying Bible passage and expanding the thought, each could provide a profitable exercise in meditation for those who meditate in such a way. The preacher could work up most of the prayers into admirable sermons.

To the prayers have been added *Personal Devotions for Holy Communion*, a devotional commentary on the action and prayers of the Anglican Liturgy, which could be used, as he has clearly used it, as preparation and thanksgiving, or in deepening one's devotion during the service.

To this is added *The Divine Exercises*, a treasure which he has obtained from his friends the Thera-Vada Buddhists of Burma. They believed in no personal God but they tried by their meditation to bring love, joy, compassion and peace to all men. He has rewritten these aspirations as Christian prayers.

Finally he has given us a poem, the *Hymn of Faith*, in which his thoughts about man and God clearly show the influence of Teilhard de Chardin.

*Oxford Mission
Calcutta*

A. P. CARLETON

Ethics Since 1900: by Mary Warnock. O.U.P., London, 1966.
Pp. 150. Price 7s 6d.

This is an admirable introduction to philosophical ethics as practised in England and America during the present century. It accepts the viewpoint that philosophical ethics is concerned to analyse the nature of moral judgements and statements, not to prescribe any set of values or courses of action. It ranges from F. H. Bradley and G. E. Moore through Oxford Intuitionism and Logical Positivism to post-Wittgensteinian Linguistic Analysis. The last chapter, on Existentialism, is an acknowledgement that other ways of doing Ethics than that of British Empiricism are possible.

The book should be widely recommended to Indian students reading for the B.A. in Philosophy. Theologians will be

interested in Mrs. Warnock's repudiation of the 'self-determinism' which has tended to dominate recent philosophy in favour of a more common-sense view of free-will. The style has that lucidity and freedom from obscure technical jargon which has always marked the best British philosophical writing.

Oxford

J. C. HINDLEY

The Bible and Ethics: by S. J. de S. Weerasinghe. 'The Bible in Asia' Series: C.L.S., Madras, 1965. Pp. 55. Price Re.1.25.

This little book seeks to discuss the four important ethical issues of Gambling, Bribery and Corruption, Family Planning and Racial and Minority Tensions against the background of a rapid social change in Asian countries. It does so mainly by drawing together findings from numerous conferences, mostly of East Asian Christian Council origin, and presents these in a clear and readable form. It raises—but understandably does not answer fully—a number of good questions and therefore offers good material for church and theological college discussion groups on these issues.

Considering the title of the book, however, one could have wished for a little more discussion of the place and value of the Bible itself in Christian ethics.

Bishop's College
Calcutta

R. W. BOWIE