

Reviews.

God and Man, Four essays on the Nature of Personality, by Emil Brunner. (Student Christian Movement Press, 5s. net.)

In these four essays on the nature of personality, Dr. Brunner brings his well-known emphasis on the sovereignty of God to bear on the problems of personality. He writes vigorously and with a strong sense of conviction, and his conclusions are bound to arouse considerable discussion. The first essay is devoted to a criticism of the philosophers' idea of God. Greek philosophy, Brunner holds, has for a long time had a stranglehold on the Biblical conception of God. Idealism, realism and the system of identity are in turn brought under his acute scrutiny, and are rejected because they all share in the conception of man as, in his inner nature, one with God. This, Brunner argues, is not according to the conclusions of faith: for faith tells us that man is a sinner whom God reconciles with Himself by forgiving his sins. He is very severe on the metaphysicians. "It is impossible to build up the Christian proclamation of the Gospel and its theology on the basis of a philosophical doctrine of God." "A philosophically reasoned faith in a personal God is a contradiction in terms." "Not by philosophical speculation do we come to know God: He is only to be known in His revelation of Himself." We shall agree that the path of metaphysics does not carry us all the way we wish to go, but in estimating Brunner's position it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he makes too clean a division between thought and revelation. Is he not making too abstract and formal a distinction when he declares "The Lord, the Creator, cannot be fitted into any system of thought, but can only be comprehended in obedience."?

The second chapter on the Problem of Ethics is marked by Brunner's desire to free our notions of conduct from the domination of rationalistic ethics. Both idealistic legalism and realist eudaemonism share a common weakness. They trust man himself to achieve the good, and in their motive they are self-centred. In accordance with his general scheme in this book Dr. Brunner stresses the power of Christian faith in producing true freedom. It is the activity of God which creates a new relation between Himself and man, releasing man from bondage. "All ideological ethics, all ethics of principle, are unmerciful and inhuman. They are not only loveless, but also they prove themselves time and again ineffective. They unfold programmes of social reform . . . but it is faith that frees us from all slavery to programmes."

This emphasis on the final and complete determination of God in all human well-being is directed, in the fourth chapter, against systems of naturalistic psychology. Naturalism, Brunner argues, fails to do justice to man's spirituality and freedom. Idealism, on the other hand, refuses to see man's real dependence on the body, and errs in tracing back evil to man's bodily nature. The Biblical view, on the other hand, sees the contradiction in the nature of man: for on the one hand man is created by God, and on the other he is a fallen sinner. We are thus to interpret man as a "broken unity."

From this rapid reference to three chapters it will be gathered that Brunner's treatment of the problems is distinctly "heavy going." Dr. Cairns, who has translated this book, says that Brunner's style of lecturing is clear and emphatic, but, it must be admitted, Brunner has a love for the startling sentence that is not always self-explanatory. Dr. Cairns tells us that many country congregations in Switzerland and Germany have been puzzled by the sermons of young pastors who are adherents of the new view. One of them is reported to have begun a sermon, "I have never loved God, and I shall never love Him." It is not only village congregations that will find a certain bewilderment in the arresting declaration of the Barth-Brunner school. Dr. Cairns feels (and we share the feeling) that the new movement gives the impression that it is more concerned with discussing systems of thought than human realities, though, we must admit, Brunner has his little jest against the scientific psychologist who really knows less of the life of the soul than the man in the street!

Chapter three, in which Brunner deals with the Church and Revelation, deserves special comment. It is a fine argument, sustained throughout on the loftiest level, that the Word of God, which is the ground of personality, is also the ground of the Church. In masterly fashion Brunner sweeps aside all humanistic conceptions of the Church, and lifts us to the idea of the historical fellowship of the Church through which man realizes his true fellowship, and through which God ensures that His message of salvation shall be taken to all places and to all times. We recommend the study of this chapter as a fine antidote to the modern tendency which sees nothing more in the Church than a human society.

A word of special appreciation must be added regarding Dr. Cairn's excellent introduction to this book, and his illuminating discussion of the main points now at issue between Barth and Brunner.

F. TOWNLEY LORD.

The Veil of God, by H. Wheeler Robinson, M.A., D.D. (Nisbet and Co., 2s. 6d. net.)

The Principal of Regent's Park College is widely known and respected, in our own ranks and far beyond, for his writings on the Old Testament and on Biblical Theology, and for his expositions of Baptist principles. This attractive looking volume in the "New Library of Devotion," edited by the Dean of St. Paul's, is of the more precious and intimate things of personal faith, and it will be very eagerly welcomed by all those who know the author. It is written for that great company "who from time to time may find it hard to hold the faith without wavering, because for one reason or another God seems to hide Himself." Nature, history, even the great drama of redemption and its record in the Scriptures, the inner life of man and the supreme mystery of death, alike seem to conceal as well as reveal God. In six brief but closely knit chapters, each of which closes with a prayer, Dr. Robinson deals with these "veils." The series of books to which this belongs is intended so to handle the central themes of Christian experience that they may strike with fresh vigour upon the hearts of readers. It is difficult to imagine that anyone will read these pages thoughtfully and not be lastingly grateful for them, for they are themselves an unveiling of the author's own deepest beliefs.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

The Development of Religious Toleration in England, by W. K. Jordan, Ph.D. (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 21s. net.)

Dr. Jordan is giving the student of history what will long remain the standard authority on Toleration. The first volume, covering the period from the beginning of the English Reformation to the death of Queen Elizabeth, appeared in 1932 (*Baptist Quarterly*, vi., 187); the present volume deals with the important period from the accession of James I to the convention of the Long Parliament (1603-1640); and a concluding volume, which will include a complete bibliography for the whole study, is promised.

The plan of this volume is admirably clear. There are five long chapters: The Dominant Groups, 1603-1625; The Dominant Groups, 1625-1640; The Minority Groups, 1603-1640; The Laymen and the Moderates; Roman Catholic Thought and its relation to the development of Religious Toleration, 1603-1640. The development of the policy which led to the Civil War and to the cleavage within Anglicanism is clearly traced. Baptist and Congregationalists come prominently on the scene, and Dr. Jordan devotes fifty-six pages to a careful examination of Baptist Thought and its Relation to the Development of Religious

Toleration. It is with them, he says, "that the tolerant implications of Protestant sectarianism becomes most fully apparent . . . It is to their great credit that, though persistently persecuted, they maintained steadily the doctrine of religious liberty, and denied that any human power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, exercised any legitimate authority over the human conscience." The author shows full acquaintance with our denominational literature of the period, and he summarises the teaching and writings of Helwys, Smyth, Busher and Murton with fine judgment. One discovery will excite Baptist historians, both in this country and in the United States. Leonard Busher's *Religious Peace; or, a plea for liberty of conscience* is perhaps of equal significance with Helwys's *Mystery of Iniquity* in the development of the theory of religious toleration. Very little is known of him, but on the title page of *Religious Peace* he described himself as a citizen of London. He was exiled well before 1614 and sought refuge in Holland. In his book he puts forth the simple axiom that no temporal or spiritual power may coerce faith. For "as kings and bishops cannot command the wind, so they cannot command faith." Of the first edition of this book no copy was thought to be extant, and the edition of 1646, which, two centuries later, was reprinted by the Hanserd Knollys Society, has generally been relied on. But Dr. Jordan understands that a copy of the first edition is in the Huntington Library collection, and, if this is so, the 1646 edition should be closely compared with it.

Dr. Jordan's study can be commended whole-heartedly to all students of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods, and it should find its place on the shelves of all libraries worthy of the name.

SEYMOUR J. PRICE.

Christ in the Modern Scene, by F. Townley Lord, D.D. (The Epworth Press, 2s. 6d. net.)

This is a bracing book, with the positive note dominant throughout. Christ is real and active, at work in the world of to-day. The chapter headings are arresting: "He gives us a song and puts colour into life; takes us inside religion and shows us life creative; makes us rich and gives us romance; breaks the conventions and disturbs our complacency; shows us reverence for life and gives us power for to-morrow; makes us adventurers and shows us the Father; refutes the critics and saves and abides." The author's scholarship does not obtrude—yet it is there—and many apt illustrations, the fruit of wide reading, enrich the pages. A book to stimulate faith and deepen devotion.

The Christian Epic. A study of New Testament Literature. By Mary Ely Lyman (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 8s. 6d. net.)

It was inevitable that the early Christian Church should produce great literature; in its life were the conditions requisite—heroic abandon to a cause, passionate feeling about that cause, an uncalculating devotion to its interests, and a transcendent joy in its possession. How that literature—gospel, chronicle, epistle, homily and apocalypse—came into being is discussed in this book. The New Testament met "definite needs in special localities at given times. Special problems had to be dealt with. The needs of given churches had to be met. It belonged to its own time, and answered the needs of its own age. But at the same time it stands above its own age."

The authoress is connected with Barnard College of Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, and her treatment is both historical and appreciative. She takes the writings in the order in which they arose, thus seeing them as they are, a vivid expression of life. Naturally she begins with the earliest records, "Q," of the exact nature and content of which she admits there is no certainty. It is not known whether "Q" was a single document or many, whether it was originally written in Aramic or in Greek, whether Matthew and Luke used the same or differing versions, nor what exactly it contained. She passes to Paul's letters, which "directed to meet certain definite situations in the Graeco-Roman world in the first century, have proved to have power both to express and to inspire Christian experience all over the world and all through Christian history." Acts is divided, part being treated in the chapter, "A Diary and some stories of the Early Church," and part in the chapter on Luke. James is described as a Christian sermon, and assigned to the closing years of the first century; Hebrews shows the church meeting persecution; Revelation evinces the hostility to Rome; the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles interpret Christianity for the Graeco-Roman world.

The book is ably and interestingly written, although perhaps many of the lengthier Biblical quotations could have been omitted (surely if references were given readers would consult their Bibles), and anyone who reads it with care will have a new appreciation and understanding of the New Testament.

The Baptists of Towcester, by Ernest A. Payne, B.A., B.D., B.Litt. (Billingham and Son, Northampton, 1s.)

Mr. Payne's ability as a historian needs no emphasis, particularly when he is dealing with Northamptonshire, a County that he has made peculiarly his own. This booklet of twenty

full pages, which covers a period of two hundred and fifty years, reveals the careful research and marshalling of facts which we expect from him. He takes us into the company of early General Baptists; later he introduces John Wesley, William Carey, and other notabilities; and then he shows how a church of the "General" persuasion became "Particular." Would that all local histories were as competently written.

Are We Uniting? The Prospects of Reunion in England, by Hugh Martin, M.A. (Student Christian Movement Press, twopence.)

No one has a more intimate knowledge of the Reunion movement than Mr. Martin, and in this booklet he carefully summarises its present position and prospects. He recognises that beyond question there has been a set-back in the progress towards Christian unity in England, and speaking of the Baptists suggests that no one claims that a majority of them are in favour of uniting with anybody. He faces the reality of the situation, and draws the conclusion that if there is ever a United Church of England it will be: (1) a unity based upon a common Faith; (2) a unity of comprehension and not of compromise; (3) a Church in which will be preserved the elements of value in the episcopal, presbyteral and congregational forms of church government; and (4) a Free Church.

Casting out Fear, by Frank Buffard, B.A., B.D. (Student Christian Movement Press, 1s. net.)

Any book with something to say about the way to handle life in the face of its fears is sure to have readers in these days. Mr. Buffard, in this short but most interestingly written book, has given us an account of the place of fear in life, its causes, and the way it can be met with confident faith born of a living relationship with God. The chapters dealing with courage as the fruit of forgiveness, and the crowding out of fear by eager obedience to the will of Christ, are full of wise practical counsel. This is a book to put into the hands of such of our friends as are "troubled by many things."

The Lord's Prayer in Modern Life, by R. Guy Ramsay, M.A. (Kingsgate Press, 2s. net.)

This is a very brief but helpful exposition of the Lord's Prayer. It gathers up the many shafts of light that have come from the study of this prayer and focuses them on the thoughts men are thinking and the problems they are dealing with to-day.