

Reviews.

Christianity in the Eastern Conflicts, by William Paton
(Carey Press, 2s. 6d. net.)

The sub-title of Mr. Paton's book is "A study of Christianity, Nationalism and Communism in Asia," and this gives us a clear indication of its contents. We have many books dealing with the situation inside Europe at the present time—books that give real help from varied standpoints to an understanding of European problems. But it is difficult to get intelligent and reliable guidance on Asia and present day Asiatic events and problems, political, social and religious. Our daily newspapers, with one or two notable exceptions, give us nothing but scraps of information on the vital issues in the modern world of Japan, China, India and the Near East. The B.B.C. is occasionally very helpful, but I suggest that Asia and Africa are sufficiently important from the world standpoint to justify one talk a day on one or other of the leading countries of these great continents. Probably a little less crooning wouldn't be greatly missed by the majority of B.B.C. listeners.

Writing from the standpoint of a man who believes with all his heart that Christianity has a message for all peoples and civilisations, Mr. Paton takes us with him in his several months' journey through the chief countries of the East, and brings us into vital touch with the pressing and complex problems of these lands and relates them all in a masterly way to the missionary enterprise of the Church.

Mr. Paton is well equipped for writing such a book as this. Of Scottish descent, he was born in London fifty years ago, and received his education at Whitgift School, Pembroke College, Oxford, and Westminster College, Cambridge. At Oxford he took high honours in "Greats." He is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of England, but has devoted all his life, since 1911, to missionary organisation, secretarial and literary, first in connection with the Student Christian Movement, then for several years in India as Secretary of the National Christian Council, and for the last ten years joint secretary with Dr. Oldham of the International Missionary Council, and Editor of the *International Review of Missions*. Mr. Paton is a man of broad human sympathies, and while seeing and capable of fairly presenting the two sides of a case, he has strong convictions of his own, and a remarkably balanced judgement. He is equally at home in theology, evangelism, education, economics and politics.

The book is based chiefly upon the experience of a journey undertaken by Mr. Paton during the autumn, winter and spring of 1935-36. It is divided into two parts, "Things Seen," and

"Reflections." The first part, covering more than one hundred pages, gives the most important facts and movements in the life of the four great regions of Japan, China, India and the Near East, looked at from the point of view of the growing Christian Church. It is very few, if any, readers of this book who will not get new light from some or all of these chapters. Unlike Lord Halifax, I am prepared substantially to accept all that is implied or expressed in what Mr. Paton has to say upon India. What he has to say on Japan, China and the Near East will be of very real service to me, as it will be found to others in watching in days to come the progress of events in those lands especially in their bearing on the Christian movement.

The second part of the book, covering some one hundred pages, is a scholarly survey of the fundamental implications and problems of Christianity as a missionary religion in contact with the many varied forces and movements now dominating the Eastern mind. The titles of the chapters indicate the range of subjects dealt with: The Gospel and the New Age; Church, Community and State; The Life and Witness of His Church; The Church and the Social Order. Grave indeed are the problems facing Christianity in Eastern lands to-day, but the situation is not less grave in Europe. Mr. Paton brings it home to his readers with overwhelming force that Christianity stands for something of momentous significance in the remaking of the world of to-day, East and West. Throughout he emphasises the primacy of the Church as the divine instrument of advance. I am inclined to agree with Principal Whale that *Christianity in the Eastern Conflicts* is "the most convincing apologia for the missionary enterprise of the Church that I have ever read." I commend it for careful reading and study to the staff and students of theological colleges, to ministers and intelligent laymen, not forgetting members of missionary committees. For purposes of orientation the book will be found invaluable to all interested in the missionary enterprise of the Church. Mr. Paton speaks of the population of India as having increased one hundred millions since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Exact information is, I know, not available, but my information is that the increase has been fully 200 millions during that period.

GEORGE HOWELLS.

The Parables of the Gospels And their meaning for to-day, by Hugh Martin, M.A. (Student Christian Movement Press, 5s. net).

The literature on the parables grows apace. Mr. Martin's book follows hard on those of Dodd and Oesterley. The

parables stand out for us in these days interpreted with both an enriched knowledge of their background and a new and vivid realism; the strange fanciful expositions of detail and the allegorical interpretations are surely banished for ever. Mr. Martin makes his own distinct and valuable contribution to the subject. He has combined careful and accurate scholarship with a gift for clear and lively pointing of the central issue of each parable. He is refreshingly free from any attempt to force an interpretation in the face of difficulties. Throughout he has focussed the timeless message of the parables on contemporary happenings and problems, war and peace, poverty, the social order, the totalitarian state. There are many allusions that give a fresh slant or an intense colour to a familiar picture. ("To make the Samaritan the hero of the story was like making a Jew the hero before an audience of Nazis in modern Germany").

Not the least important part of the book is the introduction with a valuable section on the meaning of the Kingdom of God. This is a book that will be of value to every student of the parables, and a book that should be in the hands of those who have to teach lessons on the parables, in School or Sunday School, or elsewhere.

W. TAYLOR BOWIE.

A Fresh Approach to the Psalms, by W. O. E. Oesterley, D.D., Litt.D. (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 8s. 6d. net.)

Dr. Oesterley has added to his long and rapidly growing list of works a notable book on the Psalter, which introduces the reader to the great variety of recent work on the *Psalms*, and which presents in a lucid and convenient form a vast amount of useful and important material.

At the beginning of the century, it was commonly held that a large proportion of the psalms belonged to the late post-exilic period, not a few of them coming from the Maccabean age. But of late there has been a considerable recoil from this position, and there is to-day a disposition to recognize a large pre-exilic element in the Psalter. Dr. Oesterley aligns himself unequivocally with this newer position, and believes that the psalms ascribed to David are revisions of older psalms, many of which were actually by David. Instead of turning us to the arid discussions on the date of the individual Psalms on the basis of their contents—so indefinite in their clues—he follows Gunkel in directing our attention to the types of poem found in the Psalter, and believes that by studying the individual psalms in relation to those of similar type, we may

get truer guidance as to the general period from which they came, without attempting to fix the precise circumstances that gave rise to each. Nor does he ignore the psalmody of Egypt and Babylon, of which we have such full knowledge to-day, but shows at once how close are the links between Hebrew psalmody and this literature, and yet how great is the distinction between them. Moreover, the modern study of Hebrew prosody has brought an important contribution to the study of the *Psalms*, despite the many points that are still obscure, and here, again, Dr. Oesterley presents the fruits of that study in a careful and judicious statement. Perhaps of greater interest, because breaking ground which is fresh in a treatise of this kind, are two most valuable chapters on Music in the Ancient East, and in Israel, while the chapters on the Messianic Psalms and on the Theology of the Psalms—and especially that on the Hereafter, where several passages outside the Psalter are also treated—will probably be rated by many readers the most helpful in the book. The final chapter on Demonology represents views which Dr. Oesterley first presented, I believe, in the *Expositor* in 1907, but which have not been largely noticed by more recent writers.

A few minor criticisms may be noted, without in any way detracting from the immense service Dr. Oesterley has rendered by this book. On pp. 63 f. we are told that the Korahite psalms must be considerably later than 400 B.C., to which date *Chronicles* is assigned, to allow for the improved status of the Korahites found in them. The date given for *Chronicles* is surprising, since in Oesterley and Robinson's *Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* the date is given as the latter part of the fourth century or even later, and it is more probable that the Korahite psalms precede *Chronicles*, and that, as Snaith has argued in his *Studies in the Psalter*, the Korahites fell in status (cf. Numbers xvi). Fuller attention, too, might with profit have been given to Mowinckel's work. Dr. Oesterley is thoroughly familiar with it, and refers to it at some points. For instance, he accepts Mowinckel's views on the Annual Enthronement Festival, modelled on the Babylonian New Year's Festival. The general reader would probably have welcomed a little fuller treatment of this, indeed, but Mowinckel's views on the magical use of many of the psalms, and on the cultic significance of the psalm headings, are left entirely unnoted. While Dr. Oesterley clearly does not share these views, they are as deserving of attention as Begrich's strange views on the headings, which are dealt with.

Dr. Oesterley recognizes that at several points he is dealing with controversial matters, on which the judgement of all

scholars will not be with him. That is inevitable. But the wide range of his learning and the balance of his judgement will give the reader confidence in his guidance, and he will be grateful for a book which puts him in possession of so much information on the composition, thought and uses of the Psalter. He will be the more grateful because it is presented, not in the dry technicalities of the scholar, but with attractive simplicity, and with real penetration of the enduring religious value of the *Psalms*, whose 'appeal to the hearts of men,' as Dr. Oesterley well says, 'nothing can ever lessen, where the religious instinct is not suppressed; for they are, on the one hand, a constant reminder of God's love for man, and, on the other, a never-ceasing incentive to man to be true to God.'

H. H. ROWLEY.

Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System, by G. R. Driver, M.A. Old Testament Studies, No. 2. Published under the auspices of the Society for Old Testament Study. (T. & T. Clark, 7s. 6d. net).

This is not a book for the general reader, as its title sufficiently indicates. It is a highly technical work for the Hebraist, and for him it is of very considerable importance. Until now, the classical book on this particular subject was that by the father of the present author, familiarly known to all students of Hebrew as *Driver's Hebrew Tenses*. That fine book (which covered a wider ground of Hebrew syntax) was written at a time when comparative Semitic philology had not yet been able to make much use of the Babylonian language. In the light of the new knowledge this has brought, Mr. G. R. Driver, an expert in this field, has worked out a theory of the peculiar use of "tenses" in Hebrew which is partly based on the Babylonian usage. It is a book which will be studied by scholars all over the world, and is a fine example of what scholarship really means.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

Gospel Criticism and Form Criticism, by W. Emery Barnes, D.D. (T. & T. Clark, 2s. 6d. net.)

This is an examination of the rather fanciful theories of the German scholar Dibelius, whose book has been recently translated into English, under the title "From Tradition to Gospel."

As a "Form Critic," Dibelius attempts to describe the origin of the Gospels by selecting certain passages which by their

"form" bear inherent marks of priority: and indeed divides the subject matter of our present Gospels into three categories, which he calls, Paradigms, Tales and Legends. Of these only the Paradigms he considers to be entirely trustworthy.

By a careful analysis of some of the passages so isolated, Dr. Barnes shews how arbitrary and subjective, and even self-inconsistent this division is; and affirms the superiority of the theories of scholars like Westcott, Hort and Sanday.

In particular the book attacks the idea that no trustworthy tradition of the things that Jesus did and said was preserved in the early Church, and the consequent omission to give proper consideration to the testimony of the early Christian Fathers.

While by no means a Traditionalist, Dr. Barnes very properly pleads for a more conservative point of view; and his book is a very able corrective to some of the more extravagant ideas now being put forward by some of the "Form Critics." Though quite small it is packed with material and will well repay careful study.

A. J. BURGOYNE.

They Found God, by M. L. Christlieb (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 5s. net.)

Many are the roads which men travel in their quest for God, and in this account of some little-known holy lives—saints and mystics—we learn how they reached that apex of human experience. Servant, Royal Councillor, Family Man and Recluse, Philanthropist, they believed in and obeyed the inner longing and desire, and following, found the Way. They were not born holy; they were of like passions with ourselves; and the outcome of their walking with God is very lovely. Their stories are centuries old but their problems are the problems of to-day. Would that a modern Nicholas Von Der Flue could do for our disruptive, inflamed, Europe what he did, in 1481, for the Swiss Cantons which then were at loggerheads and threatened with civil war and ruin.