

Reviews.

The Mission and Message of Jesus (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 25s. net).

This volume of close on one thousand pages, under the joint authorship of H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson and C. J. Wright, has been produced to supply a demand for "an untechnical volume dealing with the Four Gospels in the light of modern research". Dr. Major contributes an Introduction and deals with Incidents in the Life of Jesus: Dr. Manson devotes himself to the Sayings of Jesus, while the concluding section, from the pen of Dr. Wright, gives us a survey of the Fourth Gospel under the title "Jesus the Revelation of God". There is no doubt that the result brings before the student of the New Testament the findings of modern scholarship as applied to the Gospels, setting out those findings in a very attractive manner, so that it is sheer pleasure to work through the volume. The type is so clear, and the general arrangement so attractive, that the book fulfils the purpose of an up-to-date commentary without at all looking like one! The general position adopted by the authors, who belong to different denominations, is stated in the Introduction. "There are many to-day who . . . feel that they cannot understand the Gospels as they are; they seem such a strange medley of fact and fiction, of harmony and contradiction, of eternal truth and contemporary Jewish mythology and superstition." Readers will therefore be prepared for an approach to the Gospels which is thoroughly "modern". Dr. Major argues that Mark's Gospel contains a body of Petrine reminiscences, but "this does not mean that Mark's Gospel . . . is absolutely accurate. In some cases St. Peter's memory, after so many years, may have been at fault; in some cases St. Mark may have misunderstood St. Peter, or in other cases may have recorded his teaching inaccurately; in other cases he may have made additions which, although non-Petrine, were very highly valued by the Roman Church". Dr. Wright does not accept the traditional view of the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and, while not definitely committing himself, suggests the claims of John the Presbyter, a disciple of the beloved apostle. "The presence of two Johns at Ephesus, one a disciple of the other, might naturally give rise to some of the confusions that attend the tradition on this question of authorship." The radical character of this volume is seen in its tendency, with which many will not be in agreement, to minimise a good

deal of the historical basis of the record. Dr. Wright, for example, over-stresses the allegorical element in the Fourth Gospel. In regard to such miracles as the turning of the water into wine, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water, the raising of Lazarus, Dr. Wright's view is that "the author was in most cases freely and dramatically allegorising some historical tradition" and takes liberties, in the interests of his spiritual aim, with the historical setting. "It is as clear as anything can be that (the author of the Fourth Gospel) had not a scrupulously historical mind." Dr. Wright rejects the idea that the author of the Fourth Gospel was an eye-witness of the whole public ministry of Jesus. The furthest he will go is to suggest that he may very probably have had some contact with Jesus. Dr. Wright's position on the "signs" may be quoted. "We have no wish to dogmatise on the precise historical incidents behind these 'sign' narratives. We have not the requisite data to decide in each case beyond a peradventure. It seems clear that when the evangelist wrote there was a considerable body of stories of the 'works' of Jesus floating about in vague and indeterminate form. The author chose such as commended themselves to his primary purpose. He felt himself completely free to alter them in order to bring into more striking relief the spiritual significance of Jesus and the nature of the Mission He accomplished. To our own view, it is in the highest degree psychologically improbable that the evangelist believed he was in these narratives recording precise history." Without doing any injustice to the fine contribution made by this volume to a spiritual understanding of the Gospels, we feel compelled to point out that the critical conclusions reached cannot be accepted in all cases without serious reservations.

Yet, if it be realised that the position adopted in this volume is not necessarily the last word, and that, as we think, there are elements in the traditional view which are much nearer the truth, this exhaustive study has much to commend it. We may mention Dr. Major's useful summary of the main views as to the historicity of the Gospel record, Dr. Manson's often suggestive treatment of the Sayings of Jesus, and Dr. Wright's illuminating study of the author's mind and the main themes of the Fourth Gospel. An unusual and welcome feature is the frequent and apt literary allusion.

F. TOWNLEY LORD.

The Beginnings of the Christian Church, by Hans Lietzmann (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 10s. 6d.)

In this translation (by Dr. Lee Woolf) the successor of Harnack is introduced to English readers. This is the first

volume of a projected "History of the Early Church", and even a cursory reading suggests that Dr. Leitzmann moves with assurance among the problems of historical and literary criticism. His forty years' study of the sources is laid at the disposal of the reader. This, indeed, appears to be the main value of his book, for Dr. Leitzmann is at his best in sketching a historical situation and in compact sketches of historic figures and movements. Beginning with a vivid picture of Palestine and the Roman Empire, he leads us to a study of Judaism, John the Baptist and Jesus, and so to a rapid survey of the Early Church. Chapters on the fortunes of Jewish Christianity, and the sub-Apostolic period lead us to valuable sketches of Ignatius, Marcion and Gnosticism. If at times we miss a little of the "glow" which the New Testament itself gives us, that is perhaps only to be expected in a work concerned mainly with the material which the student has at his disposal. This is illustrated by Dr. Leitzmann's remarks on the Resurrection. "The verdict on the true nature of the event described as the Resurrection of Jesus, an event whose significance for the history of the world cannot be measured, does not come within the province of historical inquiry into matters of fact, but belongs to the place where the human soul touches what is eternal."

F. T.L.

The Philosophy of Religion, by Emil Brunner. Translated by A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf. (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 6s. net.)

The distinguished author and his theme naturally suggest that here we have a book of definite importance, especially since it deals with the philosophy underlying the most provocative theological movement in modern times. The reading of it bears out this importance, though it lacks—and this is our major criticism—desired fullness and completeness of treatment, a defect which we trust will be remedied in the near future. It is fitting that Emil Brunner should be its author, since he leans more to the philosophical side of the Barthian Movement than do its other leaders.

The note struck is naturally Hebraic and not Hellenistic, in that it is written from the standpoint of Protestant Theology as underscored by this movement. Two unequal parts constitute the book. In the first he discusses the problem set for the philosophy of religion through the collapse of the paradox of unity inherent within the Reformers' doctrine of Scripture. Orthodoxy, Rationalism, Subjectivism and Historicism are the chief points of view here surveyed. In the second and much larger section he comes to grips with the elements of truth in

all these points of view, within the framework of "The Meaning of Revelation."

His position briefly is this: Philosophy, science and culture (even religion in its general sense) are all human creations, thus subject to man's essential limitations. Not that Barthianism is against these in themselves, but only when they embody man's pride in himself—itself an "idol" of reason—to break through to the ultimate. The real opponent of faith, therefore, is none or all of these, but the failure and the reluctance to see the insufficiency of their achievements. It follows, in his judgement, that a man of faith must hold that the personal and living God can never be known from possibilities that lie either in the world or in man's spirit as such. God can only be known through His personal word, through that special event to which the Bible, and the Bible alone, bears witness, and the content of which is Jesus Christ.

Naturally, the book will not be accepted *con amore* on all sides, yet it is more than welcome, especially since it is born of a passion of faith, and sets alternatives before the reader with the precision comparable to the fine edge of a Damascus blade.

F. CAWLEY.

The Nestorian Churches, by Aubrey R. Vine, M.A., B.D., B.Sc. (Independent Press, 227pp. 6s. net)

Of recent years there have been discussions in the Council of the League of Nations and the House of Lords regarding the future of a small community of some 30,000 persons, at present unhappily located in Iraq, but until 1918 settled in Turkish territory between the Caspian and the Mediterranean. Syria, Persia, Brazil and British Guiana have each been suggested as a suitable new home. Not many of the few genuinely interested in their welfare could give any clear account of their origin. The newspapers refer to them as Assyrians, adopting a name used by the Anglican Church, which for a century has cultivated relations with them because they were found to be (in the words of Mr. Vine) "Christians speaking Syriac, a language closely akin to that spoken by our Lord Himself; Christians who had maintained their faith for over a thousand years as an island community in a sea of Islam; a Christian Church whose history went back far before the Reformation, which yet owed no allegiance to the Pope; a Christian Church which in some superficial ways might even be called an Eastern Protestantism." The Assyrians are the sadly reduced remnant of the once widely scattered and powerful Nestorian Church, whose ancestry can

be traced back into the fifth century, behind Nestorius himself, to Theodore of Mopsuestia and the rejection of the title Theotokos as applied to the Virgin Mary. After the Persian Church had become "Nestorian", it spread rapidly into Arabia, India, Turkestan and China, the seventh and eighth centuries being those of the greatest missionary activity, the tenth being that in which the Church reached its greatest strength.

For most of our information regarding these Christians of the East we are indebted to Roman Catholic and Anglican scholars. It is good to find a young Congregational minister, in the tradition of W. F. Adeney, interesting himself in their story. Mr. Vine has provided a careful and competent "concise history of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian schism to the modern Assyrians". It has both the strength and the weakness of the university thesis, and it is to be hoped that Mr. Vine will have opportunities of continuing his useful studies in this little-known field. A brief but valuable monograph on Nestorians in China, to which he does not refer in his bibliography, is Mrs. C. E. Couling's *The Luminous Religion* (Carey Press, 1925), which contains a translation of the Sianfu Nestorian tablet by Professor Saeki of Tokyo.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

Marianne Lewis and Elizabeth Sale, by Ernest A. Payne, B.A., B.D., B.Litt. (Carey Press, threepence).

A well told story of two pioneers of Missionary Work among Women.

Church Trusts and Trustees, by A Church Trustee. (Lindsey Press, sixpence.)

A pamphlet containing 36 pages of suggestions as to the creation and management of trusts and many useful hints for the guidance of trustees.