

Reviews.

The Philosophic Basis of Mysticism, by Dr. Thomas Hywel Hughes (T. & T. Clark, 12s. 6d.).

The author points out in his preface that we have no book dealing adequately with the philosophical implications of Mysticism. To attempt to supply the deficiency is a large undertaking, requiring wide knowledge and first-rate scholarship, but Dr. Hughes has discharged the task with manifest ability. He begins with a discussion of the meaning and characteristics of Mysticism, and then proceeds to deal in turn with its epistemological, psychological and ethical aspects in the light of modern knowledge. Though he deals fully with each aspect, he gives most space to the discussion of psychological questions. Here the treatment is particularly illuminating, as he shows himself exceptionally well versed in all the ramifications of Modern Psychology. The clear and straightforward style in which the book is written reveals an easy mastery of the material. As Mysticism is a difficult and complex subject, this is no inconsiderable achievement.

The book is to be commended as an admirable introduction to its subject, as it takes little for granted and surveys the whole field. Those who are only superficially acquainted with the study of Mysticism will find it a most useful guide to fuller knowledge in respect of both the subject itself and the literature which has grown up round it. The value of the book in this connection is largely due to the author's method of summarising the opinions of the leading authorities on each question as it arises and then subjecting them to careful examination and criticism. Extensive quotations are made from the writers cited, who are thus allowed to state their case in their own words. Whoever masters this work will learn who are the best authorities and what is the exact nature of their respective contributions. More advanced students will also find the book of value in bringing them well abreast of the most recent research. As we have no up-to-date introductions to the subject of a comprehensive kind, this book meets a real need. Those who are not specially interested in Mysticism will find it worth consulting on such wider issues as the validity of religious experience in general.

Dr. Hughes' treatment provokes one serious criticism on a major issue. He follows most English writers in taking Mysticism in the wide sense as denoting the type of religion which seeks direct intercourse with the Supernatural. Although this view has been disputed by some of our foremost thinkers,

such as Heiler, Söderblom and Oman, he does not really face the challenge. If we assume the position which he represents, we are compelled to regard as normative of first-hand religion the highly specialised experience of the classical mystics, but it is more than doubtful if genuine experimental religion should necessarily conform to the strictly mystical type. It is better to regard Mysticism as a special variety of spiritual religion. Indian Mysticism is the prototype, and probably the source, of every other species. Christian Mysticism is to be explained, not as the highest type of Christian experience, but rather as a modification of it due to the intrusion of Eastern mystical ideas into Christianity through the Neo-platonism of Augustine and the Pseudo-Dionysius. It is significant that Christian Mysticism always tends to deny the specific character of the evangelical experience by regarding divine communion more as an achievement through asceticism than as a gift mediated through Christ the Saviour. There is, of course, a mystical element in Christianity in the sense that the goal of salvation is fellowship with God. But this is far from saying that Christianity is a mystical religion. As Dr. Hughes is concerned for the most part with Western Mysticism, it is to be regretted that he has not explored its specific character in relation to the Mysticism of the East. Had his treatment followed less the traditional lines, he might have put us still further in his debt by helping us to see the true significance of the fusion in Christianity of the evangelical and mystical experiences, as this is exhibited in the great mystics of the Church. The opinion may be ventured that such an investigation would yield most profitable results.

W. E. HOUGH.

The Qur'an: translated, with a critical re-arrangement of the Surahs, in two volumes, by Richard Bell: Vol. I. (Surahs I.-XXIV.) (T. and T. Clark, 12s. 6d.).

This is a new translation, by the lecturer in Arabic in the University of Edinburgh. Its special feature is the "higher criticism" of the Qur'an. The complex structure of most of the Surahs is analysed into its presumed sources, which are indicated by typographical devices, and a brief introduction to each Surah states the author's conclusions. The translation is carefully and competently made, though its endeavour to keep very closely to the Arabic often leaves the result obscure. Thus the rendering of XII. 14, "Surely if the wolf eat him, and we a band, we in that case are indeed losers," is a literal version of the Arabic, in syntax and vocabulary, but does it really bring out the meaning as is done in Rodwell's translation: "Surely if the wolf devour him, and we so many, we must in that case be weak indeed"

(even better Sale, "when there are so many of us")? Some of the English expressions are not happy; why "dubitate" for "doubt" (III. 53), and "Wielder" of the Day of Judgement (I. 3), for "King" or "Controller"? However, this is pre-eminently a book for the student, rather than for the general reader, and such peculiarities of English diction may serve to call attention to the meaning of the Arabic, whilst the literary analysis will be a real help in studying the confusion of the subject matter, which makes the Qur'an a very difficult book to follow.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

The Forgiveness of Sins, by E. Basil Redlich, B.D., Canon Theologian of Leicester (T. & T. Clark, 10s. 6d.).

The author's thesis cannot be better stated than in his own words: "This essay is an effort to restore human forgiveness to its rightful position as a condition which must be fulfilled either separately or as an element of repentance before God's forgiveness can be granted" (126).

The plan of the book falls roughly into four sections: (i.) A summary of the teaching on Forgiveness in the Old Testament, Apocryphal and Apocalyptic writings, (ii.) An analysis of New Testament doctrine on the subject, (iii.) A resumé of the Church's teaching and practice in regard to the remission of sins, (iv.) A discussion of the rationale of Forgiveness.

It is naturally to his handling of the Gospels, in particular, that one turns for light upon the author's main contention, and here he is surely entirely right as to the importance which Jesus attached to human forgiveness.

Mr. Redlich goes so far as to claim that unforgiveness is an example of the Unforgivable Sin (Mark 3.28 ff.), but even if one hesitates to follow his exegesis here, the well-known phrase in the Lord's Prayer—to say nothing of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant—virtually establishes his point. "God as Father gives all His created children possibilities of enjoying His gifts in Nature as well as His gifts of the Spirit. His gift of forgiveness is conditional because He as Father cannot forgive a son who is at enmity with his brother" (282).

Mr. Redlich is less convincing, however, in the use which he seeks to make of this truth. Can one speak of human forgiveness as forming, with repentance, the "two conditions of divine forgiveness" (104) without recognising that these two conditions are not on all fours with one another? To insist upon the *primacy* of forgiveness seems to postulate unwarrantably the

invariable presence within a penitent's mind of a spirit of resentment. Further, to speak, as Mr. Redlich does, of "forgivingness" rather than "forgiveness" is apt to detach the act of pardon from its root in a concrete situation and thus to rob it of moral content. Mr. Redlich says, "In forgivingness there is not only a sense of sin through the wrong committed by others on us, but also an overpowering sense of love, kindness and charity, irrespective of offences" (278). One is tempted to ask, if this be the condition of God's pardon, who then can be forgiven? Mr. Redlich is on sounder ground when he urges that he is really advocating a worthier conception of repentance as necessarily an act which includes a man's relations with his fellows and moves him to reconciliation with them.

A more serious difficulty arises over what the author means when he says that forgiveness of others is a condition of being forgiven by God. He is rightly concerned to emphasise the freedom of God's pardon. "God's forgiveness is given not for any merit of ours, but of His gracious love" (160). But he is led at times into statements which go perilously near to rob that emphasis of its meaning. For example: "A penitent to prove worthy of being forgiven must possess something of the very nature of the great Forgiver. To deserve forgiveness, the spirit of the Forgiver must be there" (143f.). "In ourselves we are unworthy of His mercy, but in showing forgivingness to others we reveal something of the character of Him who desires us to be worthy of His forgiving. Because of our love for man through forgivingness, because of our faith and repentance, we can confidently ask that He should forgive us and be assured that He does" (311f.). One reader, at any rate, put down the book with an uneasy sense that the full evangelical position had not been successfully maintained.

R. L. CHILD.

Religious Essays: A Supplement to "The Idea of the Holy," by Rudolf Otto. Translated by Brian Lunn. 160 pp. (Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 2s. 6d.)

These essays by the late Dr. Otto, of Marburg, first appeared in English in 1931. Their re-issue in "The Oxford Bookshelf" series is to be warmly welcomed, though they recall a Germany that has largely vanished. A rich and varied fare, they develop and apply the fruitful concept of "the numinous," which Professor Otto expounded in his important and well-known book, *The Idea of the Holy* (several of the essays first appeared in the larger German Editions), attractively revealing something of the many-sidedness of the author, who was a great scholar and a great Christian gentleman. He writes here *inter alia* of

the idea of sin, of the Lord's Supper, of liturgical reform, of Darwinism and of Protestantism. Of the papers dealing with Comparative Religion, none is more important than that on "Parallels and Convergences in the History of Religion." The whole book deals with issues which will remain after much present theological and ecclesiastical controversy has been silenced.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

The Mastery of Fear, by R. S. Birch, M.A., Ph.D. (Independent Press, 1s.).

Release, by McEwan Lawson (Independent Press, 1s.).

Here are two timely books whose worth is greater than their size or price. They are both relevant to the increasing discovery of the toll that is levied on our lives by fear and other forms of bondage.

Dr. Birch, whose book consists of four lectures delivered under the Ancient Merchant Trust, gives a popular account of the function of fear, the cause of its appearance in morbid forms, and the way in which faith provides its antidote. The author has drawn freely on his clinical experience as a psychiatrist to illustrate his contentions.

Mr. Lawson covers a wider field, dealing with release from such things as doubt, habit, boredom, sex muddle, old age. He writes as a Christian minister giving pastoral counsel, as one who understands the queer complexities of the human mind and the way in which a lively Christian faith untangles them. He has some particularly valuable things to say about the plea that a man can please himself as to what he does with his life.

Both these books will enrich their readers with a robust and infectious hopefulness about Christian living.

Edinburgh, 1937. The Story of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order, by Hugh Martin, M.A. (Student Christian Movement Press, 2s.).

Mr. Martin has achieved the difficult task of giving a compact and popular account of the Edinburgh Conference and its reports with no little skill. In the short compass of this book he includes a sketch of the oecumenical movement from Edinburgh 1910; an account of the Conference and a reference to some of its leading personalities; a summary of reports and findings, and an indication of salient points in the discussion. In spite of necessary compression the book reveals the significance of the Conference, and the way in which difficulties and disagreements showed themselves, and were frankly faced, but against a

background of growing unity both in thought and practice. Even more valuable is the impression of the admirable spirit and temper in which complex and delicate issues were handled, and the quality of inspiration and fellowship that made the Conference the experience it was. Those who read the Official Report will appreciate it all the more with this book as their introduction. Those who read this book will want to go on to the study of the Report.

W. TAYLOR BOWIE.

Henry T. Hodgkin, A Memoir by H. G. Wood, D.D. (Student Christian Movement Press, 5s.).

Men and women who had contacts with the Student Movement and the Student Volunteer Missionary Union in the early years of this century will be grateful for this memoir of Henry T. Hodgkin. He lived a full life, and in the pages of this book the reader is introduced to the Student Movement leader, missionary to Chinese students, Secretary of the Friends' Foreign Missionary Society, founder of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Secretary of the National Christian Council of China. Dr. Wood has painted an attractive picture of a great and lovable man who served his generation according to the will of God, and given valuable information about the movements in which Henry Hodgkin was interested. People who have a concern about the Kingdom will profit from a study of this memoir, and it is a good book to put into the hands of young people who are realising that the problems of the world cannot be solved apart from Christ.

THOMAS POWELL.

Son to Susannah. The Private Life of John Wesley, by G. Elsie Harrison (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 8s. 6d.).

The Bi-centenary of Methodism in May, 1938, will arouse enthusiasm and thanksgiving wherever the name of John Wesley is known, and the thoughts of many will turn to that room in Aldersgate Street where the founder felt his heart "strangely warmed," the only fact about him, said a theological examiner, known to some students whose examination papers he had read.

The Bi-centenary is calling forth a spate of books, but, when others have been forgotten, this study, brilliantly written and sparkling with wit and irony, will continue to intrigue readers. No student of the times, especially of the Evangelical Revival, can afford to ignore it. Mrs. Harrison knows Methodism intimately, both in its origins and its world-wide development. She walks with assured step through the Epworth parsonage,

introducing us to its varied personages; and then proves an entertaining and understanding guide as she unravels the tangled tale of John Wesley's relationship with the womenfolk, until Mrs. Molly Vazeille "caught him in his fall between his stirrup and the ground." But the gifted authoress does more, for she reveals John Wesley as a great human, great enough to be used by God for the awakening of England. Not all venerating Methodists will enjoy her frank disclosures and her fun at the expense of their hero, and some may question if she has been quite fair to Brother Charles. Perhaps she will reward them with a study of Methodism's foremost singer.

Roman Catholicism and Freedom, by Cecil John Cadoux, M.A., D.D. (Independent Press, 5s.).

First published in March, 1936, this timely and important book has now reached a third edition, and the author has taken advantage of this to add fourteen pages of supplementary notes, which deal, *inter alia*, with Abyssinia, Spain and the 1936 Education Act. That the Roman Catholic Church in its corporate sense is as arrogant as ever cannot be doubted, and the lover of freedom should give this volume careful thought. It is the standard work on this particular aspect of the subject.

His Part and Ours, by J. Sidlow Baxter (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Ltd., 3s. 6d.).

The author is minister of Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, a Church whose membership roll exceeds the seating capacity. He is finely maintaining its evangelical traditions, and in this volume gives a series of heart-searching expositions gathering round the Scripture usage of the possessive pronoun "My." We can well believe that those who heard them desired their publication, and we warmly commend them for devotional reading.

John Wilson of Woolwich, by Marguerite Williams (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Ltd., 2s. 6d.).

Throughout his ministry, Spurgeon gave outstanding men to the London pastorate, and the names of Archibald G. Brown, of East London, William Cuff, of Shoreditch, John Wilson, of Woolwich, and others are easily remembered. They spoke to the multitude and the multitude heard them gladly. Happily the genial "Doctor" of Woolwich is still with us, and in this little volume Miss Williams, with loving skill, tells the story of his career from the obscure Scottish village to the sixty years in Woolwich.

EDITOR.