

## Reviews.

*Jesus and His Church* (A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament), by R. Newton Flew, M.A., D.D. (Epworth Press, 6s.)

The Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge, did well to choose the New Testament doctrine of the Church for the subject of his Fernley-Hartley lecture for 1938. Prolonged discussions of the problems of Reunion have made it clear that their solution depends very largely upon the possibility of reconciling the different conceptions of the Church held by various Christian communions. Dr. Flew has wisely concentrated upon the New Testament data, and firmly asserts that in doing so he is not guilty of "a mere Protestant provincialism." It was also sound tactics on his part to give so much attention to the Synoptic Gospels, for that took him back to the teaching and ministry of Jesus, which all Christians concede to be the very fountain head of their life and faith. It also enabled him to deal with the question, so often upon the lips of modern men, "Did Jesus intend to found a Church?" In this connection Dr. Flew disposes of the argument of those who maintain that the eschatological strain in the teaching of Jesus precluded Him from envisaging a Church. The Kingdom, Dr. Flew shows, implies a Church, though the two are not identical. The mission of the disciples and our Lord's conception of His Messianic office also imply a community, the new Israel of God. Dr. Flew then sketches the kind of Ecclesia that our Lord had in view and shows that the five New Testament writers, Paul and the authors of 1 Peter, the Apocalypse, the Fourth Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews held substantially the same ideas. His argument is built up with most meticulous care and profound learning. Indeed, there are times when we could wish that Dr. Flew had been content to state his own conclusions without supporting them with so many references to learned German works. Publishers' "blurbs" are usually to be taken with a grain of salt, but, in this case, their suggestion is fully substantiated that this book may safely claim to continue the well-known work of Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, though, of course, it deals with problems that had not arisen when Hort wrote nearly forty years ago.

It should also be said that Dr. Flew provides a careful and elaborate discussion of the promise to Peter, "On this rock will I build my church," and a fresh, though brief, account of both the missionary and local ministry of the apostolic Churches. He covers some of the ground covered by Dr. Headlam in his

Bampton Lectures (*The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion*), but he does so in greater detail and (if the Bishop of Gloucester will forgive us for saying so) with a more profound scholarship which leads him to differ from the Bishop on a few small points. On another issue it is worth noticing that, incidentally, Dr. Flew makes out a good case for some modification of the opinion, made so popular by Gunkel, that there was no ethicisation of the conception of the fruits of the Holy Spirit prior to the apostle Paul.

Particularly welcome to all whose reading of the New Testament has driven them to stand for what their fathers called "gathered Churches," is Dr. Flew's repeated insistence upon two points. First, that men can enter the Church, which is nevertheless something "given," only by professing personal allegiance to Christ. Secondly, that the Church comes into being on earth only through the preaching of the Word, and, therefore, no particular Church Order is essential to its life. Order may be important, but it can never be equated with faith. "The authority of the New Testament," says Dr. Flew, "cannot be claimed for the view which would make the Word and the Sacrament contingent upon the office, rather than the office contingent upon the Word" (p. 257). There is nothing in the New Testament which can be equated with the claims which Ignatius advances for the ministry.

Dr. Flew has given us so much, and what he has given is so excellent, that we trust it will not appear ungracious if we mention three omissions which we regret.

(1) There is no reference to T. M. Lindsay's *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, a book which we rank as equal in scholarship and insight to that of Hort.

(2) Though Matthew xviii., 19 is cited, Matthew xviii. 20 is not. Our Lord's words, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," are the sheet-anchor of all whose Church polity is Congregational. They will never accept a polity which casts any doubt on Christ's willingness or ability to keep His promise to be with those who meet in His name. Dr. Flew has only one reference to R. W. Dale's writings, and we note that it is not to a work in which that typical Congregationalist discusses the New Testament doctrine of the Church.

(3) In discussing the question whether Jesus intended a Church, more could have been made of the argument that the two Sacraments which He founded imply a Church, for they are nothing if they are not social—a point which Bishop Gore was fond of stressing.

A. C. UNDERWOOD.

*Christian Freedom*, by Albert Peel, M.A., D.Litt. (Independent Press, 3s. 6d.)

In these days of totalitarian States, the Council of Congregational churches in the U.S.A. sent for Dr. Peel to tell what their denomination has done for the church and the world. A few years ago he proved a master in condensing the facts; these lectures show his power to diagnose and to prescribe. He replies to Mussolini's "Liberty is dead, and its corpse already putrescent," with the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail, and the reminder that they must be attacked; not with infantry drilled by manuals of the fourth or sixteenth centuries, but by an air force, eyes of the army, destroying the instruments which deal out evil. Recognising the wave of paganism flooding over Christendom, he calls us to free ourselves from excrescences which have hampered our freedom, and threaten to paralyse our thinking. What powers are ordained of God? Hitler and Stalin? Did Cromwell recognise a divine right in Charles Stuart?

Repeatedly he bids our churches use their freedom. Huge buildings often nearly empty, whose paid pastors absorb the rest of money available, have no warrant in scripture, no precedent in our heroic days; they stifle our power to convert, they entomb shrinking communities. Bunyan, supporting himself by anvil and pen, preaching in barns and fields, recalls us to first principles. Wheeler Robinson is quoted as to our Biblical basis: "On what can the Protestant base his acknowledgment of the authority of scripture? The intrinsic quality of the truth which the scripture contains." Then the claim that any United Church must recognise the sacraments is dealt with drastically, and Edinburgh is shown to have knocked a great hole in its bottom by its desire to include the Friends.

Our thoughtless inertia is challenged on three definite issues. Let us think closely, individually, on the subject of war; then in discussion hammer out a short-term policy as well as a permanent; and arrange to mobilise Christian opinion whenever a crisis arises. Let us use all the modern social customs for the spread of our views; motorcar as Paul used ships, radio as Jesus used the boat off-shore, gramophone as Mark invented Christian literature, cinema as the early converts illustrated in their lives the difference Christ had made. Let us recognise how our opportunity is shrinking every year; apathy led to the extinction of our faith over all Central Asia, persecution is stifling it in Russia and Rumania and Germany; the churches which are still free still have their opportunity.

W. T. WHITLEY.