

## Reviews.

*The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan. Edited by Hugh Martin. (S.C.M. Press, 12s. 6d.)

*The Pilgrim's Progress* ran to eleven editions during Bunyan's lifetime and many subsequent editors have turned their attention to it, with widely differing motives. A Roman Catholic version bears the head of the Virgin on the title page! What Macaulay described as "the most extraordinary of all the acts of vandalism" took place when, in 1853, the work was touched up to serve as a piece of Tractarian apologetic. A "Progress of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, from Bedford Goal (1675) to Bloomsbury Street (1947)" would make enlivening reading. It can be said, however, that Bunyan's latest editor has served him faithfully and us magnificently.

Dr. Martin has used the text of the latest edition published during the author's lifetime and where changes have been made "the governing consideration . . . has been to present the text as Bunyan wanted it to be, but free of all distractions due to the printing habits of his time which only interfere with the enjoyment and appreciation of the modern reader." Admirable assistance has been given by the artist, Clarke Hutton, whose lithographed illustrations (there are over fifty of them) were drawn direct on to the plate. Would an index to these illustrations have been out of place? In type, binding and general design the production is of a quality all too rarely handled today. The edition is enhanced by the editor's introduction. Amongst other matters he deals with the main difficulty felt by Bunyan's modern readers. "The story is one thing; the theology, we feel, is another." "As a serious picture of the Christian life the story may well seem very exaggerated and too intense to many quite sincere Christian people today." It reminds us that Bunyan was a child of his own times, he was a Puritan, and he was John Bunyan. Yet he "did not expect everybody to travel just the same road." In his allegory he brought other good souls to the Celestial City who did not encounter his dangers and difficulties. In such books as this, moreover, there is a reality of Christian experience, described in unforgettable words, such as cause them to "outlive their theology."

Is Bunyan being read today? Someone wrote recently of the "extraordinary popularity" of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Doesn't

that sort of remark assume that what ought to be is? Who and where are the people that are reading it? It is a work unknown to all but a very few of the younger generation; and do older folk often take it down from the shelf that holds those books "everyone ought to possess"? My hope is that by its very attractiveness this latest edition will lure strangers into "Bunyan country"; once they are inside we can leave the rest to Bunyan.

G. W. RUSLING.

*Christ is Alive*, by G. R. Beesley-Murray. (Lutterworth Press, 7s. 6d.)

This book of 178 pages, which is warmly commended in a Foreword by F. F. Bruce, Lecturer in Greek at Leeds University, sets forth the evidence for believing in the Resurrection of Jesus, the central importance of that belief, and its moral and spiritual implications for human life. The book falls mainly into two parts. The first, and longer, part seeks to demonstrate the fact of the Resurrection of Christ, and gives a convincing account of the evidence for the empty tomb and the reality of Christ's Resurrection appearances, authenticated above all by the amazing effect which they produced in the lives of those who claimed to have seen Him. The second part discusses the significance of the Resurrection of Christ for the individual Christian, the Church, and the world, and its eschatological promise of the conquest of death and the "restoration of all things" in the Second Advent.

Mr. Beesley-Murray has given us an interesting book which will, we believe, stimulate and confirm the faith of many; but he nowhere comes to grips with the greatest difficulty which the accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus present to modern thought. We no longer think of heaven in spacial terms, but regard it as a realm transcending space and time. How can a "body," extended in space, such as the Resurrection body of Jesus appears to have been, inhabit eternity which is, by definition, non-spacial? We wish that the author could have helped us with this problem. The Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul has the advantage of avoiding this difficulty, but the author will have nothing to do with it (p. 12). He evidently suffers from the "Helleno-phobia" which is so widespread in Christian theology today. But the true solution of the problem would probably be a "higher synthesis" of the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul with the Hebrew doctrine of the Resurrection of a "spiritual body." The former safeguards the philosophical truth of the non-spacial character of eternal life; the latter rightly stresses the re-integration of the whole personality in the after-life.

A. W. ARGYLE.

*The Work of Christ*, by P. T. Forsyth. (Independent Press, 10s. 6d.)

This is a book in which the dry bones are made to live. It makes inspiring reading because, in and through it, is heard the voice of one who was indeed a prophet of the Lord. The words of the author carry great conviction and his vital personality is stamped on every page. The contents of the book were delivered in lecture form in 1909, taken down in shorthand, and finally published. The advantages and disadvantages of this are obvious to the reader. The language is vigorous and impressive, but the style is sometimes difficult and the sense in places obscure. There is a foreword by Dr. Whale and a revealing and helpful memoir by Forsyth's daughter.

The subject is the atonement wrought by God in Christ. Here the Cross occupies the central place; it is the very centre of gravity itself; it is the crisis of all crises. What matters, however, is not just the fact of the Cross, but its interpretation—what God meant by it. It is the means whereby *reconciliation* is effected. This is a great Christian doctrine, but first and foremost it is a mighty act of God, for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." How is this reconciliation brought about? By the representative sacrifice of Christ crucified.

Atonement has to deal with solidary sin—the forgiveness of a *world*. God is dealing here not with a mass of individuals, but with the race as a whole; it is a racial salvation which is to be effected within which each individual has his place and part. The aim of the Gospel is the regeneration of human society as a whole. Christ offers solidary reparation, for there is created in the sinner a solidary union of faith which incorporates him with Christ forming a spiritual solidarity. He is our representative, and the solidarity involved in His representation is due to His own act of self-identification and not to natural identity with us. But is not repentance a condition of forgiveness? Yes, and our repentance was latent in His Holiness which alone could and must create it in us. He represents before God a new penitent Humanity whose penitence and obedience are already implied in His holiness. The reconciliation has been finally and universally effected—what we have to do is to appropriate the thing that has been done and enter upon the reconciled position.

But the human race could not be put in right relation to God's holiness until there was not only confession of sin, but confession of holiness as well. God is a Holy God in whom the demands of holiness on a sinful humanity must be met. This was done by Christ who presented to God a perfect racial obedience and holiness. Christ's confession of the holiness of God is *adequate* to meet God's demands. The atoning thing in Christ's suffering

was not its amount or its acuteness but its obedience, its sanctity. What is required is not an equivalent penalty, but an adequate confession of God's holiness, and that was met in Christ.

This is a truly objective atonement; in it God Himself made the offering, for "God was in Christ." At the heart of it stands the Cross and on the Cross hangs one whose sacrifice was utterly unique.

D. S. RUSSELL.

*College Street Church, Northampton, 1697-1947*, by Ernest A. Payne. (Kingsgate Press, 2s. 6d.)

Discussion of the theory of "the gathered community" is to the fore in Baptist circles today. Mr. Payne's account of the history of College Street Church is one of those books which remind us that "the gathered community" is a concept born in and enriched through Christian experience. "It records the faithful witness of a continuing succession of good men and women who, through many changes, have stood for the simplicity and freedom of the New Testament in Christian worship and fellowship."

Certain features of the Church's history stand out. It has been served by a notable succession of ministers (including such as the Rylands, senior and junior, William Gray, and John Turland Brown); by laymen of outstanding calibre (the sort of men who could help to see the Church through a six year vacancy in the pastorate); and by Christian women, encouraged to take an active part in its life by a progressive attitude which has long characterised the Church.

Other dominant notes are sounded clearly—the Church's steadfast adherence to a tradition of open membership, its prominent place in the work of the Northamptonshire Association, and an interest in the B.M.S. which goes back to its intimate connection with the founding of the Society. This is the story of a Church of character and it leaves one with the impression that the author found himself at an exceptionally congenial task when he accepted the invitation of the minister and deacons to write it.

All those qualities which we are accustomed to find in Mr. Payne's work come out here once again. Meticulous accuracy combined with generous appraisal, the note of personal interest, and, behind the actual writing, the competent research which has its fruit in a document of historical worth as well as an absorbing story. The production is well up to standard, but there is a discrepancy, so far as the title is concerned, between the cover and the title-page. There are seventeen good illustrations and,

indeed, it is quite a study in the evolution of Baptist ministerial dress to run through the portraits reproduced!

Mr. Payne believes that since the story of the College Street Church "is a part of the history of England, a part also of the long story of the Church Universal" it is "of concern, therefore, to all who love their country and to all who love Christ." His readers will be won to the same verdict.

G. W. RUSLING.

*Let God be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther*, by Philip S. Watson. (Epworth Press, 10s. 6d.)

This book is very warmly to be welcomed. Luther studies have been few and far between in this country for at least a generation, though recently there has been some unfortunate political pamphleteering in which his name has appeared. With the help of the Fernley-Hartley Trust, the tutor in Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Handsworth College, Birmingham, here offers us, at a very moderate price, a careful and sympathetic exposition of the major themes of Luther's theology. He is concerned, first, to defend Luther against the charge that he was no theologian. In Mr. Watson's view, he achieved what may truly be described as a "Copernican Revolution" in passing from the anthropocentric (or egocentric) conception of religion in which he had been nurtured to the theocentric conception implied by the watchword *solī Deo gloria*, which was his no less than Calvin's. In the light of this determinative principle, Mr. Watson deals with Luther's view of revelation, with his theology of the Cross, and with his doctrine of the Word. His discussion of the last of these themes is a valuable supplement to Mr.† Rupert Davies's treatment in his recent book, *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers*, another Epworth Press publication. Mr. Watson's study is of particular value because he has drawn upon the important writings of Karl Holl (whose work has unfortunately not yet been translated into English) and upon those of Swedish theologians such as Aulén, Nygren, and Holmquist. In his exposition of Luther's theology of the Cross he accepts the main thesis of Aulén's *Christus Victor*. Holl and the Swedish Lutherans are an important corrective to the interpretation of Luther by Troeltsch. It is significant that a Methodist scholar should have turned his attention to Luther, and should be ready to criticize Wesley's criticisms of the great German Reformer. Such cross-fertilization of our theological traditions is much to be desired.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

*Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*, by John C. Wenger. (Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1947, \$2.25.)

This is the revised and enlarged edition of a book published in 1940. The author is Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Goshen College Biblical Seminary, and is a graduate of the Universities of Michigan and Zürich. Avowedly intended for Mennonite youth, the book will have a value for all interested in Mennonite and Anabaptist studies, for it brings together much information and material difficult of access, at any rate on this side of the Atlantic and in English. In fifteen chapters, Mennonite history is traced back to the witness of the Swiss Brethren, to the work of Menno Simons himself, and then on through the centuries of dispersion in various lands. A chapter of nearly forty pages on "The Theology of Mennonites" is of special importance, and among the appendices there are useful notes on Mennonite historiography and a bibliography of books in English. There are also twenty pages of illustrations drawn from varied sources. Once more the Scottsdale Press and Goshen College are to be thanked and commended.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

*Marriage Tie or Tangle*, by N. A. Turner-Smith. (Independent Press, Ltd., 3s. 6d. nett.)

For its limited size this book, which is intended for those about to be married as well as for the newly-weds, is useful so far as it goes. A very valuable part of it is the commentary that is given on the different parts of the Marriage Service, in the form usually followed in the Free Churches. There is a copy of this Order of Service given in the Appendix together with the form of contract used in a Registry Office. The contrast between the two is, as the author says, "illuminating."

While there is excellent material and advice here, there is also a certain superficiality in the treatment of the theme. More could have been made, for instance, of the fundamental character of human personality and all that is involved in the need for continence before marriage. The book would have been made much more valuable by a bibliography which pointed the enquirer to books dealing more fully with the questions which are raised. Many marriages founder through lack of knowledge in details of the physical relationship, and for such knowledge the reader might have been pointed to other books or to the Marriage Guidance Councils which are being formed all over the country.

The book will serve a useful purpose, however, and the advice it gives is generally sound.

W. W. BOTTOMS.