

Reviews.

How Came Our Faith, by W. A. L. Elmslie. (Cambridge University Press, 2ls.)

Principal Elmslie has published relatively few books, but has now given us in this volume the ripe fruits of many years of study and teaching of the Old Testament. The title of his book may cause some surprise to those who open it and find it is concerned only with the Old Testament, and mainly with the pre-exilic period. Yet the author is right to find the roots of the Christian faith in the Old Testament. This does not mean that Christianity is a natural and inevitable development out of Judaism, but that the God who revealed Himself in Christ also revealed Himself in Israel, and that the one revelation presupposed the other, and requires the other for its understanding. The author quotes with approval some wise words of S. A. Cook's: "The Bible is an indivisible whole, and to rest content either with the Old Testament alone, or with the New Testament alone, is to miss the real inwardness of that which makes the Bible the most remarkable book in the world" (p. 43). Needless to say, this recognition of the unity of the Bible does not preclude the recognition of its diversity, and is compatible with the acceptance of a historical attitude towards it. It is not regarded as on a flat level of authority. "Christian worshippers should be made aware" Elmslie observes "of the truth that theirs is a Faith that developed in history, and should glory in the fact. They should know that the Old Testament is record of God's mercy and patience in dealing with wayward uncomprehending men, and rejoice in the marvel of Israel's gradual ascent towards heavenly wisdom" (p.70 n.). The theory that the Bible was verbally inspired, inerrant in all matters and authoritative in all its parts he declares to be a house built on sand, unable to sustain itself against the tide of knowledge (p. 80).

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with the Old Testament To-day, the second with the Religion of the Hebrews, and the third with the Faith of the Prophets. The first section treats, amongst other things, of the modern study of the Old Testament and of the successive methods of interpretation whereby the sacred character of the Old Testament has been maintained by successive generations of Christian writers. Here the captions under which they are considered are of interest:

"The clouds gather (Typology)", "'The Ice-Age' (Allegory)", "The Sun returns (Renaissance and Reformation)", "'A Depression from Iceland' (The infallible Bible)", "'The Clouds disperse' (Opportunity)", "'The Open Vision' (Responsibility)". The second section deals with the land of Israel, the God of the Hebrews, the Gods of Cannan, and Jehovah, the God of Israel. The third section deals with a few selected prophets only. These are Moses, Samuel and Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Poet-Prophet, who is more generally known as Deutero-Isaiah.

There is little that is strikingly new in the positions adopted, and the chief value of the book will be found in the freshness with which the author presents his interpretation. Pertinent observations linking modern situations to ancient abound, and a certain imaginative quality pervades not a little of the book that will make it perhaps more welcome to the preacher than the scholar. The purely imaginative story of Simeon, with which Elmslie enlivens his discussion of Amos, is a piece of historical fiction and not of Biblical interpretation; but it is probable that many congregations will be held by it.

Not always is the book quite up-to-date, and in particular there is little evidence of an intimate acquaintance with the important Ras Shamra material. There are occasional references to it at second hand, but it is really surprising that Ashtarte and Asherah are identified (p. 145), and that we should be referred to Burney's *Judges* for Amarna evidence that Asherah was the name of a goddess without any mention of the much richer material now available from Ras Shamra.

On critical questions it may be observed that Elmslie maintains the thirteenth century date of the Exodus and devotes a short excursus to this subject (pp. 110 f.), holds that Hos. i and iii are successive and not parallel accounts, and rejects the view that Jeremiah's early prophecies had anything to do with a "Scythian menace". Many of his readers will recall the great book on Jeremiah by a previous Principal of Westminster College, and its persuasive presentation of the Scythian hypothesis (Skinner's *Prophecy and Religion*). It is more surprising that the author follows Torrey in the view that Trito-Isaiah should be abolished, and that the last twenty-seven chapters of the book, together with chapters xxxiv and xxxv belong together, but come from the end of the fifth century B.C. Like Torrey, he deletes every reference to Cyrus and the Chaldeans and Babylon, and further removes chapter xlvii bodily to go with chapters xiii f., and also xlvi. 1 f. Very few British writers have been converted by Torrey, and it will cheer the veteran American scholar to make one convert twenty years after the publication of his book.

We are promised a sequel to the present book, and we are given a hint that Nehemiah is to be transferred to a later age than has been commonly allowed, since Deutero-Isaiah is said to precede him while himself standing in the latter part of the fifth century B.C.

Many readers will be interested in Elmslie's view that the name Yahweh sprang out of an ejaculation Ya. He does not note that Mowinckel and Montgomery have recently and quite independently put forward the view that his name originally had the form "Ya hu", and meant "O he".

Among minor points it may be noted that on p. 148 we find *Massebach* and on p. 171 *Mazzeboth*, where the diverse transliteration of the sibilant conceals the fact that we have the same word. On p. 125 n. the Hebrew word for *liver* is inaccurately stated to be *kebedh*. Such details will not worry the general reader, who will rejoice rather in the penetrating and stimulating quality of this book, and will find it one of the most vital books on the Bible issued in recent years. It presents the fruits of scholarship in an arresting and always suggestive way, rather than the dry bones of scholarship to be picked over by scholars.

H. H. ROWLEY.

The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, by Le Roy Edwin Froom. Vol. 2. (Review and Herald, Washington, D.C. \$5.00.)

The author of this massive work has planned four volumes, of which this second volume and the third are already available, while the first and fourth have yet to be published. The reviewer has read this volume with mingled profit and disagreement—profit because of the valuable survey of the history of interpretation of certain passages in Daniel and the Apocalypse, and disagreement with the canons of interpretation whereby the author judges those whom he discusses.

The volume deals with the period from Wyclif down to the eighteenth century, and introduces the reader to the mysteries of the pre-millennial and post-millennial views of these books, as well as to the Futurist and Preterist views, and what the author regards as the orthodox historical view. Common to almost all the writers of the period was the belief that the books of Daniel and the Revelation contained a chart of the ages down to their own day and beyond, and many of them gave an anti-papal interpretation that is much to the taste of the author. He is impressed by the weight and unanimity of the voices that identify the Pope with Antichrist, but he is less impressed by the

complete diversity and proved falsity of the results to which their principles of interpretation led them. For as the reader threads his way through this volume he will see that with monotonous regularity the writers of the school which Froom regards as orthodox believed that the climax of prophecy was to be expected shortly in their own day and revised the starting point of the period they were locating. Hence the precise dates which they successively gave were steadily pushed forward, as time proves the estimates of their predecessors false. While Froom *believes* them to be true interpreters in their anti-papal views, he *knows* them to be false interpreters in their views as to the climax. His study is therefore of real importance in that it establishes objectively the errors of the whole school. Again and again they wrongly read into the prophecies the events and circumstances of their own day, and read them in because of their initial assumptions. To the reviewer the moral would seem to be clear that the initial assumptions call for examination.

A few examples will suffice. The Fifth Monarchy men accepted these principles, and by their application were led to the delusive hopes which they cherished. The mathematician Napier "calculated that the day of judgment would probably come not later than 1700" (p. 457) and the author quotes the words of Adam Clarke: "So very plausible were the reasonings and calculations of Lord Napier, that there was scarcely a Protestant in Europe, who read his work, that was not of the same opinion." To the reviewer it is not impressive, but lamentable, that all Europe was so deluded. Somewhat similarly Thomas Beverley dated the ending of the 1260 years of the rule of the Antichrist, into which the three and a half years of Daniel and the Apocalypse were translated by a large proportion of the writers dealt with, about 1697 (p. 581). On the other hand Cressener, in what Froom calls a "really remarkable forecast" (p. 596) thought the 1260 years would end about 1800.

Froom accepts this date, and believes the period came to an end in 1798 with the overthrow of the Papacy. It is hard to think that the days of Antichrist ended a century and a half ago. For since these writers believed that the millennium was to follow the overthrow of Antichrist, their impressive unity would lead us to expect that we should now be living in the millennium. Few of us are conscious of it, and most would somewhat differently describe this age. Moreover, the Second Coming of Christ was believed to be due when the papal rule ended.

The author records with some zest the attempts to prove that the Number of the Beast pointed to the Pope. Here we find some variety of ways to this pre-determined goal of the Interpreters, but surely the most fantastic—though readily copied

once it had been proposed—was that it represented the summation of the numerical values of the title *Vicarius Filii Dei*. The creator of this impossible theory admitted that the Popes never assumed this title, but the title *Vicarius Christi*, which would not serve his purpose. He therefore substituted for it one which did serve his purpose. A player who claims the right to change the value of the pieces at will ought to be able to win a game of chess, and on these principles anything can be proved to the satisfaction of those who are willing to substitute blind prejudice for reason.

Yet having said this, the reviewer would recognize with gratitude the immense labour that has gone into the making of this volume, and its real value as a study of the history of interpretation. We are given biographical facts about a very large number of writers, and specimens of their interpretation which are of interest and value even to those who do not share their presuppositions. The reviewer has for many years been interested in the history of interpretation of these passages, and acknowledges with gratitude that he has learned much from the pages of this book. He has only studied at first hand a fraction of the works here surveyed, and has been content to confine his own reading to a few examples of the various schools. He has some ideas of the incredible industry which has marked the author, and commends its fruits to those who will read its pages more objectively than the author intended, and who will be immune to his presuppositions.

H. H. ROWLEY.

Vedanta for the Western World. Edited with an introduction by Christopher Isherwood. (George Allen & Unwin, 16s.)

This is the English edition of a book which appeared in the United States in 1946. For some years a group of English intellectuals have spent much of their time in California and have, in their writings, advocated a kind of eclectic mysticism as the way of salvation from the evils and fears of our time. The best known among them are Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Gerald Heard and Mr. Christopher Isherwood. Deeply attracted by certain notes in the teaching of Christ, they have yet sought to compare and combine them with material drawn from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The volume before us, edited by Mr. Isherwood, consists of articles contributed to a magazine started in 1938 under the title *The Voice of India* and now appearing as *Vedanta and the West*. A dozen of these pieces

are by Mr. Heard, rather more by Mr. Huxley, one or two of whose contributions have already appeared in this country as part of *Grey Eminence*. Nearly two dozen are by Indians, now resident in America as agents of the Vedanta Society, which is an extension of the Ramakrishna Mission. Readers of J. N. Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India* will recall the story of Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902), the most famous of the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1834-86). Vivekananda made a deep impression at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 and again visited America in 1899. His message was that all religions are true and good; that God is impersonal, unknowable and non-moral, but manifested in all things; that Hindu civilization is ancient and spiritual, and superior to the materialism of the West. The magazine from which Mr. Isherwood has gathered the papers here reprinted, is issued under the auspices of the San Francisco and Los Angeles centres of the Vedanta Society. One of the most interesting of the papers is a hitherto unpublished autobiographical lecture which Vivekananda delivered in Pasadena in 1900. There is much that is interesting in these pages, much that is valuable for an understanding of certain sides of liberal Hinduism, much that is important for appreciating American conceptions and misconceptions about India. But the syncretism that underlies the whole, and which has affiliations with theosophy and Christian Science, is an old story, and a dangerous story. It blurs essential distinctions, both historical, intellectual and moral. It is twentieth century Gnosticism.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

The Cruciality of the Cross, by P. T. Forsyth. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d. Second edition.)

This Life and the Next, by P. T. Forsyth. (Independent Press, 5s. Reprinted.)

The decision to reissue a number of the more important books of the late Principal P. T. Forsyth was well taken. Nothing that he wrote was negligible. Much of it was far in advance of the thought of his time, and it has today a relevance and freshness which are enhanced rather than diminished by what the world has passed through since the first appearance of his work.

These two books enable some of the main features of Forsyth's theology to be clearly seen. In the first, the starting-point is "the supreme holiness of God's love, rather than its pity,

sympathy or affection". This is "the watershed between the Gospel and the theological liberalism which makes religion no more than the crown of humanity". So the Cross is rightly claimed to be "crucial" for it was there that through "the exhaustive obedience and surrender of His total self", Christ vindicated the holiness of God, and made possible the final reconciliation of God and man.

In the second of these books Forsyth deals with the effect on this life of faith in another. Christianity is not "an election to prerogative, privilege and exemption, but to God's own responsibility, service and sacrifice", and as such it is "the action of a moral process that goes on after death". To put it another way: "The Kingdom of God is the mergence into the life of history, both by growth and crises, of that saving sovereignty which is the moral power and order of the spiritual world". As men allow the sovereignty of God's holy love to take hold of their lives, they become sharers in its undying quality. Immortality is not mere survival. It is the projection beyond death of that new life of holiness and love which begins here in time through the creative action of the Living Christ upon human hearts. Those who here and now receive that life from Christ do not perish at death but rise with Him to new ventures of fellowship and service in the Beyond.

Both books need careful reading. They deal with profound themes in a great way, and those who are prepared to give them their attention will find them richly rewarding.

R. L. CHILD.

Poetry and Prayer, by Edward Shillito. (Independent Press, 4s.)

This book has been prompted by the hope that it will do something to end a serious "estrangement between the Church of Christ and the poets of earth". As our "spokesman in the realm of imagination" the poet can quicken adoration and though he may be no moralist he may lead men to repentance. Perhaps it is significant that the chapters on Intercession and the Communion of Saints lean rather much on Christian sources but elsewhere the author makes a persuasive case for the recognition of other poets as allies of the man of prayer. They often serve him in more ways than they know or intend. This book is eloquent of a ripe experience of both the worlds with which it deals. Its religious insight and literary grace are well matched with its theme.

G. W. RUSLING.

Christian Pacifism after Two World Wars, by Leyton Richards.
(Independent Press, 7s. 6d.)

The late Rev. Leyton Richards managed to get a long title for his short essay, but the importance of the book is out of all proportion to its size. Like the apologetic of the late Dr. C. J. Cadoux in *Christian Pacifism Re-examined* (1940), the arguments of this essay by a well-beloved, conscientious pacifist deserve reverent and unpatronising consideration. So many notices in the religious press about pacifist literature are exasperatingly condescending: "Pacifism may become a live issue in the near future if ominous signs fulfil themselves"; that is the profound judgment expressed in a note to introduce Mr. Richards' book in the November issue of a Christian periodical of recognised pedigree, and this generous concession is followed by an unctuous comment on the volume, which, with its innocent protestation of non-participation in the conflict, seems calculated to upset the conscientious pacifist and make him decide to join the all-in wrestlers: "This is, of course, an able book, and what the writer says ought to be considered sympathetically, and no doubt a hearing will be, and ought to be, given to the point of view urged in those pages. It is not the purpose of this notice to enter into the controversy, but simply to direct attention to the appearance of the book. Readers will find the arguments for a Christian Pacifism presented here forcibly."

The arguments are, indeed, presented in a sound and orderly fashion, under four main heads: (1) that loyalty to Christ takes precedence over every other loyalty; (2) that the way of war contradicts the way of Christ; (3) that Christ's way is God's; and (4) that the Gospel of Christ is compromised by Christian approval of war. Objections to pacifism—theoretical, (religious and moral) and practical, (social and altruistic)—are discussed and answered, and there is an enlightening chapter on "The Valuations of Christian Pacifism". Particularly relevant at the moment (when people have become "conditioned" so thoroughly, that eighteen months' compulsory military training instead of twelve months for conscripts evokes no protest worth recording), is the section on conscription. Serious criticism is offered, alike from the military, the political, the economic, the democratic, the moral and Christian points of view. (It would have done us all the world of good if arguments like these had been read to us at the Baptist Union meetings in the year when peace-time conscription was first introduced, when not a word of protest was uttered against this act of tyranny, but a great deal of indignation was shown concerning gambling and strong drink. Surely Baptists who pride themselves on their concern for human

liberty should find something to say on the subject of coercing eighteen-year-olds, if they are *so* concerned with other secular activities which we can either follow or renounce.)

Mr. Richards' closing statement in his section dealing with this subject is convincing: "conscription is always an abuse of political authority. It is a denial of those moral characteristics which distinguish Man from the brute creation; above all, it is an affront of Heaven, and for that reason it can have no place in the economy of a Christian society." Such a conviction is absolutely necessary for a Christian if he is to face an impersonal, totalitarian era without trepidation. The Church could well do with more simple Christian faith and less fatuous juristic arguments in this atomic era, and, in any case, apologetic becomes the military wing more than the pacifist. As Professor D. M. Mackinnon said in a recent broadcast, ("The Church and the Atomic Bomb" in *The Listener*, October 28); "We must never forget in our enthusiasm for something we call Christian civilisation that it was from the rootless and the outcast that the Christ called his own, and that upon a gallows-tree, between two criminals, He was content to die". Christian Pacifist apologetic must base itself on this indisputable fact, and Leyton Richards never forgot this.

D. EIRWYN MORGAN.

Seventh Baptist World Congress, Copenhagen, 1947. Office Report, edited by Walter O. Lewis, Ph.D., D.D. (Baptist World Alliance, London, 1948., 12s. 6d.)

Dr. Lewis, and those who have assisted him with this publication, and also the printers, are to be congratulated on this report of the seventh Baptist World Congress. The gatherings at Copenhagen are still fresh in the minds of the five thousand Baptists who journeyed to Denmark from overseas. Many also who were not able to be there will welcome this full official record of the proceedings. In addition to the Minutes prepared by Dr. A. T. Ohrn, the text of the main addresses is given, together with a list of the delegates, the revised Constitution of the Alliance and the names of the officers and members of the Executive, and eighteen pages of pictures, mostly of individuals. Publication difficulties have prevented the printing of more than a few of the addresses given at the sectional meetings. This is to be regretted, as is the absence of any descriptive account of the proceedings. Copenhagen was an important landmark in Baptist history. It proved that the Alliance had survived both

the War and the loss of Dr. Rushbrooke. It is good to have in full the tributes paid to the late President for they have historical as well as personal value. With one or two exceptions, the other addresses do not seem to compare in weight and permanent interest with those of previous Congresses. The Executive will no doubt give much more detailed attention to the programme for Cleveland, 1950, than was possible for the Copenhagen meetings. It is also to be hoped that, when the report of the eighth Congress is issued, the Editor will insist on up-to-date portraits for all his illustrations. Several of those used in this volume suggest, quite inaccurately, that Baptist leaders still look as they did in 1939, or even earlier.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.