

Reviews.

Commentary on the Gospel of Luke. Norval Geldenhuys.
(Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 686 pages, 25s.)

He is a bold man who ventures to issue a full scale commentary on a Gospel in these days. There are so many notable predecessors, one has to achieve high marks to deserve rank with them, and failure to make the grade invites disparagement. Mr. Geldenhuys evidently felt emboldened for the task in virtue of his position. He is a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, by no means advanced in days, uncompromisingly conservative, yet with an extensive academic training behind him of which he has made good use. The documentation of this commentary is unusually extensive; there is little in the way of New Testament critical and expository literature on the Gospels of which mention is not made. The resulting product is a blend of conservative theology and modern scholarship, with perpetual reference to pastoral needs. While the originality of such a "pastoral" commentary as that of Kiddle on Revelation is not apparent here (it is hard to be original on the Gospels!), there is much material of solid worth which will be of value to any minister.

The method of the author is to provide a brief setting of a given passage, a longer exposition of its general import, and then a detailed consideration of the Greek text. The advantage of such a plan is that one can use the book with a minimum knowledge of Greek, or even with none.

Inevitably, an exegete with the outlook of the author is handicapped in his treatment of the text. While Luke's use of sources is frequently asserted, the author is unduly anxious not to recognise them wherever they may prove awkward. We are bidden not to look for Semitic sources in chs. 1-2; while the hypothesis of a "Q" document is acknowledged as better than Luke's use of Matthew, it is virtually ignored—the Lord's Prayer e.g. was *certainly* given first in the Sermon on the Mount and later in the context provided by Luke; the eschatological discourse in Matthew is apparently a unity of which Luke reproduced but part, though curiously enough Luke is to be our guide in the interpretation of it. One may as well not learn of Synoptic criticism if one uses it in this fashion. Similarly in matters of exegesis :

one reads that the Baptismal revelation of the opened heaven, the descent of the Dove, and the Voice from heaven was no vision, the Spirit descended literally in the shape of a dove; we learn of primary and secondary fulfilments of prophecy (the "wars and tumults" of Luke xxi. 9 are: *i*, the periods of civil war and insurrection that followed Nero's death in 68 A.D. during the Roman-Jewish war, *ii*, conditions through all the centuries since, *iii*, the last days before the End—a somewhat comprehensive prophecy!); Jesus is said to have predicted that Jerusalem would be occupied by one Gentile power after another throughout history (Luke xxi. 24). A lengthy, learned and certainly informative essay discusses the date of the Last Supper and Crucifixion, the conclusion being that Jesus was crucified on the 15th Nisan—chiefly, one suspects, because only so can John and the Synoptists be reconciled.

In matters of this kind, Mr. Geldenhuys will not always carry his readers with him, but fortunately there are more important elements than these in a Gospel. On the whole the general level of the commentary is good and its spirit deeply devotional. The publishers are to be congratulated on the excellence of the format and on their enterprise in issuing a work of this kind; it is perhaps the most scholarly work they have yet produced.

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY.

Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England, by H. John McLachlan. (Oxford University Press, 25s.)

Essays and Addresses, by H. McLachlan. (Manchester University Press, 21s.)

Neither of these books should be missed by students of the seventeenth century and of our English religious heritage. Their appearance within a few weeks of one another must have been a source of mutual pride to the authors. Dr. John McLachlan is Acting-Principal of Manchester College, Oxford. His father, Dr. H. McLachlan, was for many years Principal of the Unitarian College, Manchester.

Socinianism has rarely had very fair treatment from its opponents. Though the main Christian traditions have rejected its Christology as inadequate and over-rationalistic, they have all benefitted from its consistent championship of religious freedom and its reserved and critical attitude to formulae not found in Scripture. The debt which the Church has owed to theological rebels and doubters is considerable. Dr. John McLachlan has provided a learned and illuminating study of the

way Socinian ideas reached England and of those whom they influenced. He writes with care and candour, claiming neither too much nor too little, and assembling much valuable information from the by-paths as well as the highways of his subject. The book ends with a brief reference to the views of Locke and Newton, and with some rather tantalising suggestions as to why Socinianism spread in the eighteenth century in the Dissenting academies and congregations rather than in the Church of England, of which so many of its earlier protagonists were members. We hope that the author will continue his studies on into the "Age of Reason."

In the seventeenth century Socinianism in England was not so much a sect as a movement or an ethos. The views of Faustus Socinus and his successors influenced the thinking of very varied groups and individuals. Baptists have a special interest in the subject for, though Socinus and his uncle were Italians by birth, Socinianism as a movement had its origin mainly within certain Anabaptist churches in Poland. *Anabaptista indoctus Socianus; Socinianus autem doctus Anabaptista*, said a Dutch Calvinist Professor in the mid-seventeenth century. This is a very inaccurate and misleading characterization of the varied strains within Anabaptism. But the historical links between the two movements are many. Hans de Ries, the Mennonite leader with whom John Smyth corresponded, was already in touch with Socinians exiled from Poland. From the beginning the English General Baptists shared the Socinian rejection of the main tenets of Calvinism. Elias Tookey, Paul Hobson and Matthew Caffyn find mention in Dr. McLachlan's pages, as does Jeremy Ives, who, with other Baptists, tried to secure the release from prison in 1655 of John Bidle, "the father of English Unitarianism." A detailed study of the older General Baptist churches would probably show contacts additional to those Dr. McLachlan mentions, and, though the main streams of Baptist life have recently flowed through Particular and New Connexional channels, Baptist historians need to know more about the Old Connexional churches in order to get their story into right perspective.

One of the most important chapters in Dr. McLachlan's study deals with the circulation in this country of Socinian books, and a list is given of private and public libraries containing Socinian and anti-Socinian literature. In the Angus Library of Regent's Park College, Dr. McLachlan might have found works by Faustus Socinus, V. Smalcius, J. Schlichting, John Crell and John Knowles, as well as a copy of the *Brevis disquisitio* (1633), the important pamphlet to which he devotes an appendix.

In the other volume before us a veteran scholar gathers together some nineteen essays and addresses prepared during the

past thirty years. They make a feast of good things for those interested in Nonconformist history. Many of the papers deal with Unitarianism in the north of England and with the life of the Dissenting Academies, on which Dr. McLachlan is our foremost living authority. There is a special interest in the chapter on Methodist Unitarians and the beginnings of the Co-operative Movement, in which Professor G. D. H. Cole is corrected and supplemented; and in the chapter on Daniel Mace, of Newbury, a pioneer in New Testament criticism. But for many the most important and welcome papers will be the two devoted to Alexander Gordon (1841-1931), the distinguished biographer and historian. Gordon represented the finest flowering of Unitarian culture and character; in the authors of these two books he has worthy successors.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

The Shorter Oxford Bible, Abridged and edited by G. W. Briggs, G. B. Caird and N. Micklem. (Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d. School edition, 6s.)

In this Shorter Bible, intended for private reading and for teaching in schools, the text has been arranged for the most part chronologically, to present "the record of a Community" and "the record of a definite faith." Passages have been selected from Authorised and Revised Versions and from modern renderings (although the particular source is never specifically indicated) with extracts from the Apocrypha. The selections keep rigidly to a plan and the whole work leaves a satisfying general impression. The arrangement of the teachings of Jesus under appropriate headings is particularly helpful.

The use of the term "Old Testament Church" will be questioned by some and the editors' justification for its use will not convince everyone. The notes included at each new stage in the development of the plan are concise and arresting. Those in the O.T. section look forward consistently to the fulfilment of the message in the N.T.

In view of the many good qualities and excellent production of this Shorter Bible it is a pity that its use has not been made easier by the inclusion of an index of Scripture passages. Teachers will find the suggested syllabuses helpful; a selective bibliography would have enhanced their value. The maps are unencumbered by detail better provided elsewhere and include one of the eastern Mediterranean without lines indicating Paul's journeys—a welcome change. A second map of Palestine

would have permitted O.T. and N.T. details to be shown separately.

The enthusiastic reception accorded to this book by the interested teachers in one county secondary school suggests that it will prove to be all that the editors and publishers claim for it as a guide to the study of the complete Bible in the home and in school.

H. GORDON RENSHAW.

The Illusion of Immortality, by Corliss Lamont, with an introduction by John Dewey. Second edition. (Philosophical Library, New York, \$3.95.)

The blurb of this American book is peculiarly cocksure: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" This book gives a frank and simple answer to this age-long question, presenting in clear and scientific terms the complete case against the idea of immortality." Dr. Lamont is a confirmed scientific humanist who argues that belief in immortality is an illusion, and, upon the whole, a harmful one. He quotes with approval George Santayana's saying that true wisdom "consists in abandoning our illusions the better to attain our ideals," and the ideal for him is, in this case, a full, free life in this world: "It is best not only to disbelieve in immortality, but to believe in mortality." The informed scholarship and the conscientious argument of the author serve to make Christians in the modern world realise anew the duty which is said to have been accomplished by believers in the early church—to outlive, out-die, and to out-think the pagans.

D. EIRWYN MORGAN.

Atoms of Thought, by George Santayana. Selected and edited by Isa D. Cardiff. (Philosophical Library, New York, \$5.00.)

"The perfection of rottenness" was William James' description of George Santayana's thesis for his doctorate, and Protestants, orthodox and heretical, will feel it difficult to give unqualified approval to the flamboyant writings of the Catholic free thinker whose "pithy and worthwhile thoughts are presented in sample" form in this volume. There is something grimly suggestive in the title of the anthology, but the nature of the explosive potentialities of the Spanish-American's benign humanism is less terrifying than those of "hell-bombs." It is

good to know that even a pagan can see clearly that "the contemporary world has turned its back on the attempt and even on the desire to live reasonably. The two great wars of the twentieth century were adventures in enthusiastic unreason" (p. 258). Christians, who will find so much to exasperate them in this typical modern humanist, should be charitable, remembering Dante's concession to virtuous authors who were without faith in Christ—a place in Limbo, the first circle of hell, nearest to the sunlight. The editor's amusingly simple method of compilation deserves less credit than the philosopher's contribution of "ideas on almost every subject of general interest to humanity."

D. EIRWYN MORGAN.

Religion and the New Paganism, by John Pitts. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.)

The Christian World State, by A. Wood. (Independent Press, 7s. 6d.)

The first of these books is an essay in Moral and Political Science from the Christian standpoint. In 1942 the MS. secured one of the awards which the Quebec Government gives annually for significant literary contributions by residents of the province. It is noteworthy that this was the first religious book by a Protestant to be thus recognised. Dr. Pitts shows how certain schools of psychological, political and philosophical thought have contributed to the contemporary drift from religion by striking, in particular, at the Christian doctrine of man. The discussion follows lines which are becoming familiar, but it is a successful piece of work. What the author describes as "the new psychology," "the new politics," and so on, are fluently and faithfully expounded, the flaws in their arguments exposed, and the Christian answer given. The essay rests on a background of wide reading that has been well digested. *The Christian World State* reveals a similar concern with things as they are, but its theme is not so much the drift from religion as the ultimate goal to which Christianity is marching. On examination it appears that "the Christian World State" is simply another title for the New Testament "Kingdom of God" and it must be confessed that any originality in this very sincere book lies in a few such phrases which the author has coined. He expresses many worthy sentiments, but the handling of the New Testament evidence is one-sided and unsatisfying—not least in the argument for equating the author's conception with the Kingdom of God in Christ's

teaching. Some of his points are legitimate, others more questionable. He is a warm friend of the ecumenical movement but is surely mistaken in speaking (p. 134) of "such a united Church as the one constituted at Amsterdam."

G. W. RUSLING.

The Bible from Within. A. G. Hebert. (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.)

This excellent little book, written primarily for sixth forms in schools and students setting out on divinity courses, will be welcomed by ministers as well. Setting the books of the Bible against their original historical background, Father Hebert shows what the sacred writers had to say to their own day, and what God is saying to us through them today. The result is a wealth of Biblical history and theology enclosed within a comparatively slender volume and presented with a refreshing sense of relevance.

One of the book's great values is that it emphasises the unity of the Bible; what is begun in the Old Testament is continued and fulfilled in the New. This is particularly well illustrated in chapters eight and eleven, dealing with the Messianic hope and its fulfilment in Christ. Thus the Bible is presented as the Book of the Church, and we are made to see the rich treasury in the Old Testament which the New Israel has inherited. Particularly helpful in this respect is the closing chapter on the Christian use of the Old Testament.

The book is attractively printed, and each chapter has a small but helpful bibliography.

IRWIN J. BARNES.

Venture in Faith: The story of the West Ham Central Mission, by Paul Rowntree Clifford. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 6s.)

A modern Baptist epic is here simply but worthily told. Few who begin this book will put it down till they have read it to the end. In 1897 Robert Rowntree Clifford left Regent's Park College and settled at the Barking Road Tabernacle, a church with a debt of nearly £1,000 and an unfortunate reputation for internal disputes. When forty-six years later, in the midst of the war, he died, he was still in pastoral charge, though he had passed his seventy-sixth birthday. In the intervening years a great work had been built up with wide ramification throughout the borough and far beyond. Imposing buildings had been

erected, and the name of the West Ham Central Mission was known throughout Britain and the Dominions. Rowntree Clifford's elder son, with whom the leadership of the varied activities now rests, has rightly called his story *Venture in Faith*. It has also been a venture in imagination and sympathy, qualities that have found their most vivid and effective personification in Mrs. Clifford; and a venture in persistence and loyalty, characteristics shown *par excellence* by Miss Clifford and the late W. S. Lord. But this is more than the record of achievements of a remarkable family and the friends they have so successfully gathered about them. It is a footnote of the social history of the period and an important episode in the life of the Baptist denomination. The last chapter with the title "Widening Horizons" and its brief account of the acquiring of Greenwoods, shows that it can and should be more than an episode in our Baptist story and that what has already been achieved may be but the prologue to new experiments in evangelism and social service. Many have forgotten the story of West Ham as it was; many more have never heard it. This book should once more focus the minds of Baptists—and many others—on the needs and possibilities of the work. The author makes no direct appeal for aid, but his pages should be regarded not only as a valuable piece of history, but as a challenge and a summons to new ventures in which many outside West Ham may have a share.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

The Lighted Path, by H. L. Hemmens. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 3s. 6d.)

Harrow has not only a famous school but also, in the midst of its large and growing population, a live Baptist community. In this informative and interesting little book the skilled pen of the editor of the Carey Kingsgate Press outlines the story of Baptist origins and witness in that area with special reference to the South Harrow Baptist Church which this year celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary as an independent church. A famous and popular author startled the reading public by writing his autobiography when he was only thirty-five; South Harrow Baptists have beaten him by ten years. As Rev. J. C. Rendall states in the foreword, the narrative is "written in words and in a style that everybody can understand and enjoy."

GRAHAM W. HUGHES.