

Reviews

Jesus and the Future, by G. R. Beasley-Murray. (Macmillan, 25s.)

Whatever one's views upon the subject of Eschatology, one cannot but be grateful to the author for so able and comprehensive a survey of the relevant literature. Dr. Beasley-Murray set himself to read every book of repute on the subject written over a period of about a century, a prodigious task, as a result of which we have as complete a survey as has ever appeared. The book demands, and deserves, concentrated attention. To say that it is far from light reading is no reflection on the author, but is a measure of the complexity of the theme and the closeness and thoroughness of the argument.

The sub-title shows that the compass of the book is limited to a critical examination of *Mark* xiii., with especial reference to the "Little Apocalypse" theory. The method adopted is akin to that of Schweitzer's *Quest*. The major portion of the book is occupied with a survey of the previous work, and the critical comments are pointers to the author's own views. Then follows his own examination of the Discourse and his conclusions.

The historical part is skilfully and lucidly done in three phases. The Little Apocalypse theory is shown to have its impetus in the scepticism of Strauss and its later developments are traced. Then we have an examination of alternative views which sprang from a dissatisfaction with this theory, and thirdly a survey of the more direct vindications of the authenticity of the chapter. The author has some acute observations to make which are impartially directed at both radical critics and also the more conservative, with whom otherwise the author confesses himself in sympathy.

The second section of the book comprises one lengthy chapter, devoted to the Theology of *Mark* xiii. and the relation of this section with other eschatological passages in the New Testament. Some of the acute difficulties in the Discourse are dealt with, such as the presence of Signs alongside a Declaration of the Suddenness and Incalculability of the End, and the relation of the Doom of Jerusalem and the Parousia.

Dr. Beasley-Murray defends the authenticity and the unity of the Discourse. On the former point the argument is weighty, especially as the relations of the material with other parts of the Gospels are considered. On the latter point, he is, perhaps naturally less emphatic and leaves room for alternative possibilities of

its final construction, while holding strongly the genuineness of the sayings. As he remarks, to deny the unity of the discourse is not of necessity to deny the genuineness of the sayings.

It is clearly shown that Colani's theory of an independent apocalypse of a Jewish type which has been later embodied in the Gospel arose not from a dispassionate analysis of *Mark* xiii. but as "the last stage of a developing emotional reaction to a theological problem propounded by agnostics." The strength of this book is that it does attempt to deal with the text itself. Faced with what is regarded as the indisputable fact of Our Lord's prediction of an imminent Parousia, he is prepared to accept its theological implication. His discussion of this problem is one of the most interesting parts of the book.

The author's survey shows the amazing contrast in views of the relation of *Mark* xiii. with the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, from the view that it is a conventional apocalypse of the Jewish type to the idea of Torrey—with which Dr. Beasley-Murray has much sympathy—according to which the differences from the Jewish type are such that we can almost think of eschatology that is not apocalyptic. Our author maintains, at any rate, that the motive in *Mark* xiii. and parallel Gospel sayings is edification, encouragement and entreaty rather than any apocalyptic panorama. We have referred to one or two of the many vital and interesting points; they are perhaps sufficient to indicate the worth of this book, which is an important contribution to the subject of New Testament Eschatology. Two minor errors have been observed. On p. 102 "twenty-five" should read "Fifteen," and on p. 127 we find "It is . . ." for "Is it . . . ?"

W. S. DAVIES.

Congo Background, by G. J. M. Pearce. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 4s. 6d.)

The B.M.S. has an excellent plan of sometimes sending a minister who is known to be closely interested in its work to see the work for himself. Mr. Pearce, who paid an extended visit to the Society's Congo field, has given us this interesting account of his visit. He knows how to write and the story is well told. Moreover, the author's cultural background, his acquaintance with literature dealing with the Congo, and his keen powers of observation enable him to write discriminating notes on the country, its people and customs, and the work of Christian missions. He thinks that more attention should be given to the evangelistic opportunities presented by the large towns, and to the aesthetics of church buildings. He writes discerningly on the problems that

arise with the transition of large numbers of Africans from village to urban life. It would have added to the value of his book if Mr. Pearce had said a little more about labour conditions in Angola and about the political backwardness of its people.

The Christian Life, by Paul Rowntree Clifford. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 2s. 6d.)

This is an excellent booklet. Mr. Clifford has in mind the intelligent lad or girl who is thinking of becoming a Christian. He sets out to describe the process of Christian commitment, and to bring out the significance of Baptism and Church membership and the essential faith of Christians, and then goes on to outline the way of Christian discipleship. There is a background of scholarship, but the booklet is attractively written. Something more might usefully have been said about Christian giving, and for any new edition more precise information about Baptists in Russia (p. 32) is now available.

J. O. BARRETT.

Job and His Friends, by T. H. Robinson. (S.C.M. Press, 7s. 6d.)

In this book Dr. Robinson presents us with a most helpful introduction to the Book of Job. In the first chapter he reviews the qualities and theme of the book, following these with an account of the literary architecture of the book. In his third chapter, Dr. Robinson re-tells the story of the Prologue and Epilogue of Job, lighting up the brevity of the text with dramatic power. Here, surely, our great Baptist scholar is also a great preacher.

The fourth chapter suggestively depicts the character of the friends of Job, and the role they play in the poem. The fifth and longest chapter centres in Job, and sympathetically traces the story of his daring faith and of his longing for the presence of God. In the last chapter it is made clear that the real solution of the book is no other than Job's discovery of the presence of God. All who read this delightful book will be glad of it, and will rejoice that Dr. Robinson has written of so great a book, so simply, so reverently and with such insight.

G. HENTON DAVIES.

Owing to pressure on space a number of reviews have been held over and will appear in our next issue.