

Reviews

The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation, by Le Roy Edwin Froom. Volume IV. (Review and Herald, Washington, D.C.).

With this volume a massive achievement is brought to a close. Professor Froom, of the Seventh Day Adventist Seminary in Washington, has completed an unrivalled essay in the history of interpretation, surveying in not far short of four thousand pages the views put forward by various writers from the earliest days as to the significance of the prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation. The fullness and detail with which this study has been carried through is beyond all praise. Two of the earlier volumes have been reviewed in the *Baptist Quarterly* (xiii, pp. 41ff., and xiv, pp. 89f.), and the qualities which marked them are again in evidence in this volume. The interest here, however, is a more particular one, since this volume is concerned with the background out of which the Seventh Day Adventist movement arose, and with its history.

The early part of this volume deals with American religious life in particular, though its links with British life and thought are fully recognised. Then the keen interest in these prophecies awakened by the French Revolution and all the events which followed it is traced down to the rise of Millerism, which became in due course Seventh Day Adventism—though the Seventh Day element did not belong to it at the start. Most of the interpreters began with the canon of interpretation that the seventy weeks of Daniel extended to the Crucifixion, which they placed in A.D. 33, from which they worked back to the decree “to restore and to build Jerusalem.” This was commonly identified with the mission of Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, which was dated in 457 B.C. It is curious that the arithmetic of these calculators was defective, since there was no year 0. Moreover, it was unfortunate for their theory that in the account of Ezra’s mission nothing is said about any command to restore and build Jerusalem. The interpreters usually believed that the 1260 days of the rule of Antichrist stood for that number of years, and was to be equated with the three and a half years of the book of Daniel. Since Antichrist was equated with the Pope the misfortunes of the Papacy in A.D. 1798 were believed to terminate that period. The interpreters differed as to the beginning of the period according to whether they used solar years, or turned 1260 lunar years into a smaller number of solar years. The overthrow of Antichrist did not bring in the millenium,

though in 1812 the President of Yale believed that this happy period had already begun. Like other interpreters at that time, however, he was directing attention to the 1290 days and the 1335 days of Daniel. Here, again, it made a difference whether the reckoning was by solar years, or lunar years converted into solar years. Moreover, interest was next focused on the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel, and a period of 2300 years was calculated, beginning from the same date as the seventy weeks. This led to the expectation of the Second Coming of Christ in 1843, by the same erroneous assumption that there was a year 0. This expectation was widespread before William Miller took it up. He and his associates founded their movement on this expectation, but they soon corrected the arithmetic and put the climax in October, 1844. At the same time they moved the Crucifixion back to A.D. 31, by recognising that the reckoning of 490 years from 457 B.C. should bring them to A.D. 34, but by noting that the cutting off of the Anointed One took place in the middle of the last week.

Then came the pathetic disappointment. During the last week before October 22, "Millerite merchants closed their stores, mechanics forsook their ships, and labourers left their employers. There was a putting away of all worldly things and a breaking away from all worldly pursuits." On the great day they waited with confident hope, only to find a disappointment which they afterwards compared with that of the first disciples after the Crucifixion. The subsequent reorganisation of the movement, and its adoption of sabbatarianism, are then recorded.

The whole story, related not alone in the 1,300 pages of this volume, but in the whole work, is of the greatest interest, and to the reviewer is profitable for instruction. Sometimes the reader finds it wearisome to read through so many interpretations which are so much alike, yet marked by subtle differences. The interpreters have so many figures to play with that there is abundant room for their ingenuity to seize on something promising to bring the events of their own day, or of the immediately expected future, into the prophecies. Sometimes they worked back from a given event, such as the Crucifixion or the French Revolution or the termination (temporary) of the Papal power in 1798, and cast around for something promising at the other end; sometimes they worked forwards from some event of the past to a date just ahead of their own time for the expected termination of a period. But so many periods could be used, and they could be shortened by lunar-solar conversion, or made coterminous at one end or the other, or treated independently of one another, and so many events of history, whether of the past or the present, could be seen out of proportion, that an unlimited field always lay open for the ingenuity of the interpreter. The Millerite disappointment was the most dramatic and pathetic

in the whole history of interpretation of these passages, but the uniform lesson of the whole story is that every effort to apply these canons of interpretation to them has led to demonstrable error. The faith in the Second Advent does not need to be sustained by the assumption that a cipher that would satisfy our curiosity to know the future if only we could break it lies in our hands. The Wise Virgins were not feverishly trying to break a code to know when the Bridegroom would come, but kept their lamps trimmed.

For the incredible industry which Dr. Froom has brought to his study the reviewer is filled with undiluted admiration. Every reader, from the simplest to the most learned, can profit by its study and enlarge the borders of his own knowledge. The lessons to be drawn may be variously expressed by different readers, but few will withhold from the author their recognition of his immense and exhausting labours and of his eminence as a historian of interpretation.

H. H. ROWLEY.

The Book of the Acts, by F. F. Bruce. "New London Commentary on the New Testament." (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 25s.).

Mr. Bruce, Head of the Department of Biblical History and Literature in the University of Sheffield, has followed up his useful Commentary on the Greek text of *Acts* with this one on the English text (the American Standard Version of 1901).

The text is printed and expounded paragraph by paragraph, and useful footnotes are added. The scholarship is erudite and up-to-date. The more important variations of the Western text are carefully noted. For the most part the exposition is sound and helpful, frequently lighted up by a happy illustration, like the parallel between the conversion experience of Paul and that of Sundar Singh.

The chief ground for adverse criticism lies in the construction of the book. In a volume of 555 pages only 27 are given to the Introduction, and there are no appended essays. This means that the difficult critical questions which should have received extended and systematic treatment are dealt with only in odds and ends in the course of the commentary.

The writer's standpoint is conservative, and he hardly does full justice to the arguments which have been brought against Luke's accuracy on some points of detail. For instance, the difference between the conception of "speaking with tongues" in *Acts* ii, 4 (where it means speaking in foreign languages) and that in *Acts* x, 46, xix, 6, 1 *Cor.* xii-xiv (where it means ecstatic utterance) is glossed over. The discrepancies between the three accounts of Paul's conversion in *Acts*, and the fact that Paul's own account in

Galatians i, resembles only the last in *Acts*, are too lightly dismissed.

To save Luke's accuracy Mr. Bruce identifies Paul's second visit to Jerusalem described in *Gal.* ii, with that of the "famine visit" in *Acts* xi, 30. But the events recorded in *Galatians* ii. are far more like those of the Council visit of *Acts* xv. (the third visit in *Acts*), though they cannot be wholly reconciled even with them. To explain why *Galatians* does not mention the "apostolic decree" set out in *Acts* xv, that Epistle is dated by Mr. Bruce shortly before the Council of *Acts* xv. (p. 300), being in that case the earliest of Paul's epistles. But there are serious objections to this. The subject-matter, style and phraseology of *Galatians* indicate that it was written in the period when 2 *Corinthians* and *Romans* were written. It may be doubted whether anyone would have dreamed of saying that *Galatians* was the earliest of Paul's letters but for the supposed necessity of reconciling the events described in *Galatians* with every relevant detail in the narrative of *Acts*. And even if the early date of *Galatians* is accepted the difficult question still remains, why did not Paul mention the "apostolic decree" when writing to the Corinthians (if he knew of it and had taken part in framing it) thereby avoiding a long argument on the food question, or at least reinforcing the decision to which the argument led?

Luke does not seem to have been in full possession of the facts. Though a companion of Paul, he was apparently not in the inner circle of the apostle's confidence. From *Acts* we learn little of Paul's distinctive doctrine, and the author seems unaware of the existence of his epistles. When Luke came to write *Acts*, probably Paul was dead. For the events which he had not himself witnessed Luke had to rely on second-hand or third-hand sources. He did the best he could, and has supplied us with an invaluable historical background, accurate in broad outlines, without which the Epistles would be far less intelligible than they are. As Mr. Bruce remarks: "it is Luke that we have to thank for the coherent record of Paul's apostolic activity" (p. 27). But the attempt to prove exact correspondence in every detail between all of Paul's own accounts, which must be accepted, and those of *Acts* has broken down.

Mr. Bruce rightly says (p. 25, n. 30) that *Acts* could not have been written after 90 A.D., by which time Paul's epistles became generally known; for the author betrays no knowledge of them. But it seems unlikely, we may add, that it was written before Paul's death, for surely Luke would have checked his account by consulting Paul, if that had been possible.

While we have expressed disagreement with some of the findings of this Commentary, there can be no doubt of its deep and devout scholarship, or of its usefulness as a guide, not only to ministers and students, but to laymen as well.

A. W. ARGYLE.

Jehovah's Witnesses, by Royston Pike. (Philosophical Library, \$2.75.)

This book professes to give an objective account of the origin, teaching and practice of an extraordinary sect founded by Charles Taze Russell about 1872, which in 1884 became a new religious organisation named the Zion's Watchtower Society. The fantastic doctrines and speculations of this sect, now called Jehovah's Witnesses, appear to reveal a marked incapacity for logical thought. We are confronted in this book by a tissue of contradictions, most of them inherent in the subject, but some due to the author's treatment of it.

Jehovah's Witnesses "accept the Bible as God's Word—the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. In this respect at least they are fundamentalists of fundamentalists" (pp. 32-33). "The Bible is God's Word, and God's Word cannot err" (p. 41). Yet they do not believe in the Incarnation, and they reject the doctrine of the Trinity, which they hold to be the teaching of the devil. They hold an Arian view of Christ as a created being. "In effect they are unitarians" (p. 36). They teach that Jesus was not crucified but impaled on a tree, and they identify him with the Archangel Michael (p. 51). They deny that Jesus is God's only Son. God, according to them, had two sons. The other was Lucifer, later named Satan (p. 39). It was not until October, 1914, that Satan was expelled from heaven (p. 50). The second Advent or Parousia of Christ (interpreted spiritually) took place in 1874 (p. 62). The Witnesses deny that the redeeming work of Christ was completed on the Tree or that those who trust in Him are saved from their sins and inherit eternal life (p. 56). Russell taught that the ransom for all, procured by the man Christ Jesus, does not give or guarantee eternal life or blessing to any man, but it does guarantee to every man another opportunity or trial for life everlasting at the universal resurrection. Each man must then prove by obedience or disobedience his worthiness or unworthiness of life eternal, being justified by works (p. 57).

The author of this book nowhere adequately observes that whatever this teaching is, it is certainly not fundamentalism or belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. It is a contradiction of the Bible which they claim to accept in its entirety as the infallible Word of God. But the author adds inconsistencies of his own. He writes: "They accept the Christian ethic, and we have every reason to suppose that in their daily lives they strive to put into practice the teaching contained in the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 30). Yet he has told us that "the Witnesses seldom have anything but abuse for their orthodox rivals" (p. 6), thus continuing in the Russellite tradition (p. 15), and, we may add, in that of "Judge" Rutherford, who declared that "the ecclesiastical systems, Catholic

and Protestant, are under supervision and control of the Devil" (*Deliverance*, p. 222). This is a strange way of carrying out the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount!

We are told (p. 8) that "the faithful and true witness" (*Rev.* iii, 14) is recognised by the Witnesses to be Jesus Christ. On p. 14, however, we learn that Russell believed the words to refer to himself! Either the author has failed to notice any contradiction here or he is a master of reticence. The well-known defects in Russell's moral life are admitted (pp. 15-17), but their significance appears to be underestimated.

While, however, the author's judgment is generally too lenient, in one respect he seems to do the Witnesses less than justice. On p. 32 he says that in their teaching comparatively little is said about the love of God. "In their conception of God there does not seem to be very much of the Heavenly Father who is slow to anger and quick to pity his erring creatures." Yet he admits (pp. 52f.) that they have so stressed the doctrine that God is love as to deny that there is a hell of eternal torment. This seems to be the most commendable feature of their otherwise unchristian teaching.

It would be tedious to review all the arrogant and extravagant speculations which are here exposed, concerning Armageddon, the Millenium, and the rest. It appears that the Jehovah's Witnesses select the least significant bits of the Bible, especially the more enigmatic symbols of the books of Daniel and Revelation, take them out of their context, give them fantastic and arbitrary interpretations relating to modern times, treat them as a sort of *Old Moore's Almanac* of prediction, and magnify their importance so that they overshadow all the central doctrines of Scripture. Their excesses constitute a warning of the dangers that beset those who would build a theology exclusively, or even mainly, upon eschatology.

A. W. ARGYLE.

Robert Wilson Black, by Henry Townsend. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 12s. 6d.)

No one could meet the late Mr. R. Wilson Black without realising that he was a man of exceptional force of personality. Even allowing for the fact that he was a wealthy man who used his money generously in the service of the churches it was remarkable that within a few years of being linked with the Baptist denomination he should have been elected President of the Baptist Union. This is a story of a man of outstanding business capacity and of intense devotion to the cause of Christ. Although Mr. Black in his earlier years showed a lively interest in housing conditions in Fulham and maintained a generous concern for orphaned children throughout his life, his chief interests came to be the work of his

own church (Twynholm), the Temperance cause, and evangelism. He was a Victorian, and seemed to some of those who knew him not quite at home in the presence of such new phenomena as the Ecumenical Movement and the Welfare State. His service to the causes which captured his interest was unstinted.

Mr. Black believed in employing business acumen in Christian work. It was due to his foresight, capacity, and generosity that the Free Church Federal Council secured its present premises on advantageous terms. The United Kingdom Alliance benefited similarly. Once his interest had been gained it was Mr. Black's hope to benefit the Baptist denomination in the same way. Dr. Townsend has told the story of the Russell Square scheme in some detail. It is obvious where his own sympathies lie, and some of his readers will share his view.

J. O. BARRETT.

Some Young People. Compiled by Pearl Jephcott. (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 12s. 6d.)

King George's Jubilee Trust was founded in 1935, and at the express wish of King George V it was devoted to the welfare of young people. In the course of its work the Trust came across various recurring problems in connection with youth organisations, and finally decided to undertake an enquiry into the membership of such organisations, its distribution over the adolescent period, leakage of members, reasons for joining and leaving, and so on. Naturally a large number of the organisations which are involved are attached to Churches, and this report should be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by Church officers as well as Church youth workers.

The guinea-pigs were 900 boys and girls spread over two thinly-veiled districts in North London, one suburban area of Nottingham, and four villages, three in Oxfordshire and one in Bucks. Of course the job of making contact with and interviewing young people at such a self-conscious age is a very delicate one, but the interviewers were wise enough to wonder sometimes whether the answers given represented the real reasons, conscious or unconscious, for the youngsters' actions, and they often make shrewd guesses.

The picture is not a particularly cheering one. The aimlessness and apathy of the vast majority of the people interviewed makes a sad contrast with our rather grandiose talk about modern education. The interviewers became almost pathetically excited when they found someone with a real purpose or a steady hobby. The aimlessness of the vast majority of the parents obviously overshadows everything, and even if school manages to light some kind of flame, it is soon doused by parental apathy and dull work when the youngster leaves school. Many of those interviewed said simply

and flatly that they weren't interested in religion, although the interviewers took this to mean that while they acknowledged the existence of God, they were not interested in Churches, and drew very few, if any, conclusions for their lives from whatever belief they held.

Of the 900 interviewed, about two in three did not belong to any youth organisation. Nearly half the boys were members, but only one in four of the girls. The reasons for not belonging were, of course, many, but some general trends were observable: (1) Many of the organisations were flooded with younger children. The adults did not seem to appreciate the enormous importance young people attach to age-group gangs. (2) Shyness in the sense of great difficulty in integrating oneself into a new community. This could have been overcome in many cases had the leader had the intuition to see it and the concern (and time) to give a little personal attention. (3) The dinginess of premises and unimaginative leadership.

Some hard but necessary things are said under the last head. One of the great failures of organisations is to be an alien organisation in a closely-knit community. The leaders come and go and make no real contact with the district, and they are content to take the "easy" youngsters who like to come from far and near without enquiring why some of the people on the doorstep don't come and trying to get their allegiance. The investigators are certain that there are vast stores of untapped interest among parents and neighbours, and if only organisations would enlist their help and enthusiasm, premises could be transformed and new activities started, and, what is more, the organisation would become part of the district.

There are many other wise findings which we should do well to ponder. The scene is not all black, and generous tributes are paid to the amount of work and interest put in by a vast army of voluntary workers. If only a little more discernment and initiative were added! Miss Jephcott's closing words are: "Whatever the nature of the agent to be employed in the future, the enquirers were unanimous on one point, that the spark which first lights up the possibilities of leisure more often than not comes from the friendly concern of one older person for an individual boy or girl." The setting down of a factual survey of this kind might result in unrelieved boredom, but Miss Jephcott's lively style, humour, and deft touches of atmosphere recreate the scenes for us and make reading a pleasure.

DENIS LANT.

Ordinal and Service Book. (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.)

Not a few Baptist ministers have reason to be grateful for the *Book of Common Order* issued by the Church of Scotland in 1928.

In 1931 the first edition of this *Ordinal and Service Book* was issued, and it now appears in a revised form, and includes services of Licensing of Probationers, Ordination, Induction, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Dedication of a Hall-Church, as well as prayers for constituting a meeting of a Court of the Church. Presbyterians have long had a reputation for insisting that everything should be done decently and in order, and this book, with its ordered reverence in procedure, its dignity and economy of language, admirably reflects the Presbyterian temper. But the book arouses curiosity. Why should certain tunes be more or less laid down for some hymns and not for others? Why is the Communion Service encouraged in connection with the Licensing of a Probationer and not for the Ordination of a minister? There are doubtless reasons, and some reference to them in the Preface would have been helpful.

J. O. BARRETT.

Stolen Legacy, by George G. M. James. (Philosophical Library, New York, \$3.75.)

The author attempts to prove (a) that the Greek philosophers practised plagiarism and did not teach anything new, and (b) that the source of their teachings was the Egyptian Mystery System. Pythagoras' geometry, Socrates' "Know thyself," and Plato's theory of ideas and account of the cardinal virtues were all stolen from the Egyptians. Greek philosophers did not, however, exhaust the resources of Memphite theology, and if only men of science would study it "with the key of magical principles for its interpretation," they would be able to "unlock the doors of the secrets of nature and become the custodians of unlimited knowledge" (p. 150). The "New Philosophy of Redemption" for the black people of North Africa is to be found in a recognition of the debt that all cultures owe to theirs, "the oldest civilisation in the world" (p. 161). Such a recognition on the part of Africans will induce self-respect and, on the part of white people, humility. When the contribution of African culture to world civilisation is properly recognised, "race relations should tend to be normal and peaceful!" (p. 157). The debt of Greek philosophy to the Egyptian Mysteries has not perhaps been sufficiently recognised; and the charge may be just that the attitude of white to black has been far too much that of the culturally superior to the culturally inferior. But, on both counts, the author wildly overstates his case.

God and Space-Time, by Alfred P. Stiernotte, Ph.D. (Philosophical Library, New York, \$3.00.)

This book is sub-titled, "Deity in the Philosophy of Samuel Alexander," and is a detailed study of the famous 1920 Gifford

lectures, "Space-Time and Deity." The work is in two parts. The first, called "Exposition," analyses Alexander's notions of Deity ("Even God himself does not as actual God possess deity attained, but only the *nisus* towards it"), and the religious sentiment ("The religious sentiment is the sense of our outgoing to the whole universe in its process towards the as yet unrealised quality of deity"). Dr. Stiernotte discusses the relevance of these conceptions to the problem of Evil, the question of Immortality and the fact of Good and Great Men, as this is set forth in Alexander's system. In the second part, called "Evaluation and Criticism," the author finds reasons for rejecting Alexander's notion of deity, i.e. "infinite, ineffable deity in the distant future," but he wants to retain the "*nisus*," the dynamic force behind emergent evolution. The true religious sense is reverence for the *nisus* and the highest type of "emergent," i.e. "the religious genius who unites in himself a universal value with such intensity that his life and the value are completely suffused in an 'incarnation' of human excellence and cosmic creativity."

W. D. HUDSON.

A Devotional Commentary on The Shorter Oxford Bible, by William J. Shergold. (Independent Press, 12s. 6d.)

This title might mislead some readers. The book is not a series of meditations, but a simple, straightforward working commentary. In his foreword Dr. Leslie Cooke tells us that the Lay Preaching Committee of the Congregational Union asked Dr. Shergold to provide a correspondence course for lay preachers. This material has now been brought together in book form, and provides a continuous exposition of The Shorter Oxford Bible, the divisions of which are consequently retained. Dr. Shergold has not aimed at being critical. He has simply explained and clarified. His connecting narrative is especially valuable in setting the material in perspective. While necessarily sketchy and restricted in its scope, this book will be of great value to lay preachers, day and Sunday-school teachers, and all who want the Biblical passages put into their context and clearly explained without technicalities.

A Discourse on the Life to Come, by Stephen Hobhouse. (Independent Press, 6s.)

Mr. Hobhouse, the well-known Quaker and writer on mysticism, has now passed his span of three score and ten years, and is considerably enfeebled in body, though his mind seems as clear as ever. He tells us that he has often been kept in his room for long periods, and enforced imprisonment and weakness have made him give much thought to the life to come. Our Lord gave men very little information about this further life, "hardly . . . more than an

assurance (and what a glorious assurance!) that they would still be fully alive, enjoying always His heavenly Father's love and care, and that in many cases there would be a complete reversal of the lot of rich and poor, powerful and humble." In view of this admission by Mr. Hobhouse it necessarily follows that his little book is speculative and imaginative. He draws largely on the poets, also on the mystics but, more surprisingly, on the spiritualists. He is always reverent but such speculation will only help some people. Others will regard it as presumptuous or merely unnecessary. The reference to *Matt.* xxxv, 41, on p. 70 needs correction.

Prayers and Praise, by Nathaniel Micklem. (Independent Press, 6s.)

The prejudice against "set prayers" among the Free Churches has meant that those who have felt a need for them have often been driven to seek what they need in the Divine office of the Catholic Church. It was in order to meet this need that Dr. Micklem published his little book of Protestant offices in 1941. It now makes a welcome reappearance in a revised edition. The valuable introduction and essay on "The Christian Life" stand as they were. Dr. Micklem reminds us that "we cannot let the praise of God wait upon our moods and feelings." And, I would add, our health. There are moments when from weariness or ill-health we cannot summon up the necessary spiritual impetus to form our own prayers. We are often guilty of telling sick people to pray when they are unable to make the effort, for body and spirit are more closely knit than many people care to acknowledge. In these moments of dryness, tiredness or sickness an office becomes a necessity if we are to pray at all. Dr. Micklem has put his offices in a new and more convenient order and has re-written some of them. He has varied them all so as to bring in a second hymn, or part of a hymn, usually at the expense of one of the prayers. This is in accord with our Free Church tradition, where hymns are the usual vehicle of our response to the Word of God. We are grateful for this welcome re-issue.

DENIS LANT.

The Man at the Bell and other Talks to Children, by A. Whigham Price. (Presbyterian Bookroom and Independent Press, 5s.)

This collection of thirty children's addresses is as good as anything of its kind which has appeared in recent years. Several of the talks have been published in the *Expository Times*, but there are also new ones. Each starts from a text, and draws out its lesson in a clear and interesting way. There is no waste of words. There is one talk for each of the following: Christmas, Sunday after Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Palm Sunday, Easter, Sunday after Ascension, Whitsun, Trinity Sunday and Harvest. Those who have to give a children's address every Sunday will find this book just what they need. And even children would really enjoy reading it!

W. D. HUDSON.