

Reviews

The Meeting of Love and Knowledge, by Martin C. D'Arcy, S.J.
(George Allen and Unwin, London, 12s. 6d.).

Ever since the apostle Paul met the syncretism prevalent in Colossae with the assertion that in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge because in Him dwells the godhead bodily, and John countered incipient gnosticism with the declaration that the Word became flesh so that men beheld His glory finding in Him the fulness of grace and truth, the problem of the relationship existing between the Christian gospel and the teachings of other religions has challenged the thinkers of the Church.

In our own day Dr. H. Kraemer has made notable theological contributions to this theme with his emphatic assertions of the uniqueness, not of Christianity as organized religion, but of Christ. Now in a book of 167 pages Father D'Arcy offers a philosophical discussion of this theme.

Modern syncretism finds a leading exponent in Aldous Huxley who has endeavoured, in his book *The Perennial Philosophy*, to show the fundamental similarities between all religions and thus to outline an understanding of life which is the basic wisdom of the ages. Father D'Arcy has given a careful and appreciative examination to this position, recognizing the profound wisdom to be found in the teachings of other religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. The choice quotations from the writings of these religions are a valuable feature of the book.

But the author recognizes clearly the fundamental difference between Christianity and other religions in spite of the similarity of counsels regarding the spiritual life. Both east and west have knowledge of the mystic way, but for the Christian this is a meeting of persons; consequently the end of life is not absorption but communion. The uniqueness of Christian truth is in its emphasis upon the personal so that it finds its deepest wisdom in the relationships of life which are relationships of giving and receiving, in which man finds himself in the integrity of his being just because he is found by God whose coming is an act of grace.

To this discussion Father D'Arcy brings a wealth of knowledge and a choice style. He has made a valuable contribution to an important theme and readers both Catholic and Protestant may find much Christian wisdom in his book.

L. G. CHAMPION

Documents on Christian Unity, Fourth Series, 1948-57. G. K. A. Bell (ed.). (Oxford University Press, London, 21s.).

This fourth volume of Bishop Bell's invaluable series of documents covers a decade in which there have been many significant developments in church relations in different parts of the world. The formation of the World Council of Churches, its first and second Assemblies and the Lund Faith and Order Conference; the conversations on the Archbishop of Canterbury's Cambridge sermon; the definitive edition of the schemes of Church Union for Ceylon, North India and Pakistan; the initiation of discussions in many other countries and important declarations by the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church—all these and other matters claim a place in this volume, to which the editor prefixes a brief, clear and judicious introduction reviewing the progress towards understanding and unity during the past forty years. It is dangerous to talk loosely and without one's book about matters of this moment. There is now no excuse for this, for the essential documents are here to hand in most convenient form. Dr. Bell frankly admits that there have been various disappointments and checks since the high hopes created by the Lambeth Appeal of 1920. He believes, however, that there has been a real movement forward.

ERNEST A. PAYNE

Sermons for Special Occasions, by C. H. Spurgeon. (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London, 15s.).

This is the first of twenty volumes of Spurgeon's sermons to be issued periodically for the next five years. The editor is Dr. C. T. Cook, and that is a guarantee of loving care in the selection. The Special Occasions are, for the most part, those of the Christian year.

To the reviewer, the unique religious phenomenon of the second part of the last century was the preaching ministry of Charles H. Spurgeon in London for thirty-seven years. For nearly all those years crowds filled the Tabernacle seating about 6,000 twice each Sunday. This has no parallel in all the history of the church from the first days till now. Spurgeon died in January, 1892, fifty-seven years of age. These and the following volumes are necessary documents for anyone who wishes to study and understand what took place. All the sermons bear common features. They are expository, analytic and homiletic, theological—more dogmatic than argumentative, and above all, with an appeal. The congregation is always within sight of the preacher. He has them in his mind and deeper still in his heart. He has a message for them. He has a purpose and displays it openly. He seeks and secures their conversion. And the converts become missionaries.

But beyond this, these sermons were printed and bought. They go to the Shetlands, to Cornwall, to places in Wales where English is seldom heard. Most spoken sermons suffer in print. And probably these are no exception. But the residue is still gold.

And here they are for us today, to encourage us in a difficult time. I wish the dates of their first delivery had been inserted.

B. GREY GRIFFITH

To Build and to Plant, by H. W. Abba. (Independent Press, London, 7s. 6d.).

The Rev. H. W. Abba went to Beverley in 1906 to take charge of a small Congregational work which had been begun in a housing estate. There was only a handful of people meeting in a hut. He stayed forty-five years, and during that time saw the church grow into a vigorous and sizable community housed in modern buildings. When he retired it was to the sorrow of his people.

His was a remarkable ministry exercised through years in which the Free Churches generally were losing ground. What was its secret? First, Mr. Abba cared for people and made it his business to get to know all sorts and conditions. More, he became the best known and most loved figure in the district. Secondly, his preaching was Biblical. He resisted the excesses of liberal thinking and steadily expounded the Bible as the living Word of God to men. Finally, he was a man of prayer and saw to it that his church was a praying church.

Mr. Abba records some striking examples of the conversion of men and women in middle life. He clearly does not take the view so often taken nowadays that the one hope of new disciples is in the Sunday-school.

Parables from Daily Living, by Margaret Shave. (Independent Press, London, 6s.).

When the present reviewer noted in the publisher's blurb of this book that it contained stories for women's meeting he began to read it with some foreboding. He soon realized that here was something well worthwhile. The book is well written and free from mawkish sentimentality. It comes from the pen of a writer who looks out upon life with discernment and sympathy and who has a keen insight into human character, needs and motives. Moreover, the stories reveal a sure grasp of the evangelical message. Christ is shown as the Bread of Life, the Saviour who is adequate to every need and whose power has transformed many a life. This little book can be warmly commended.

JOHN BARRETT

A Commentary on Mark Thirteen, by G. R. Beasley-Murray.
(Macmillan, London, 18s.)

In his introduction, "The Authenticity of *Mark 13*," Dr. Beasley-Murray summarizes the five reasons given by Colani (in 1864) which provided the ground from which many attacks upon the authenticity of this chapter as a word of Jesus have been made. To these he adds four further points representing more recent criticisms such as those of Wendt, Schweitzer, Hölischer and C. H. Dodd. The main point made is that the Discourse reflects the outlook of the Jewish Christian church and not that of Jesus. The writer asserts, on the contrary, that the *Jewish Christian* eschatology revealed in the gospels, and in this chapter in particular, is so un-Jewish in its Christo-centric emphasis that it must be accepted as stemming from Jesus.

The commentary itself is minutely detailed, one hundred pages being devoted to the discussion of these thirty-seven verses! Each verse, or group of verses, has its own expositional comment followed by exhaustive critical notes. In the body of the commentary is an excellent extended note on the history of interpretation of the *bdelugma eremoseos* in which Dr. Beasley-Murray analyses each of the many interpretations of this phrase. The author maintains the position he took in *Jesus and the Future*. He claims that the view that the *bdelugma* was the Roman Army (which was soon to destroy Jerusalem) and its standards, satisfies all the requirements of the text but does not exclude many of the other traditional explanations of the saying.

There may be many points on which scholars may differ from Dr. Beasley-Murray but all will be grateful for his insistence that this chapter has both moral and practical messages, which makes it of abiding worth. The speculations regarding possible interpretations of apocalyptic symbolism easily lead to the conclusion that they belong to the scholar's study (or to the Hyde Park Corner "soap box"!). Here, in the course of a scholarly survey, we see the practical value of these sayings coming out spontaneously from the study of the text. We will refer to two passages to illustrate the point. In comments on vv. 9-19, in which Jesus warns His followers of persecutions, we are reminded how our Lord asserts that even suffering can be used by the disciple for service or witness. "The Gospel is to be preached at all costs, and judicial courts are to be viewed as providing audiences for the message" (p. 41). Our second illustration comes from vv. 26-7, which may be regarded as a more "typical" (in both meanings of the word!) apocalyptic writing. Dr. Beasley-Murray shows how the effect of the parousia on the sun, moon and stars is described, in poetic parallelism, to make a sombre background for the Shekinah glory of His Coming. Then we see the Son of Man, Son of God, performing that act which is "all-of-a-piece" with His earthly

ministry, drawing together the elect from the uttermost parts of heaven and earth. "The goal of history is the union of God's people with his Son in the eternal Kingdom; that is all disciples need to know—in the first and in any other century" (p. 90).

Apocalyptic writings always arouse interest in days of crisis. Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray's book not only provides us with a masterly analysis of the argument regarding the textual validity of this sorely used chapter; he also shows us that it carries the imperative of Christian morality and the assurance of Christian hope.

A. STUART ARNOLD

The Origin and Transmission of the New Testament, by L. O. Twilley. (Oliver & Boyd, London, 8s. 6d.)

In seven chapters and less than seventy pages, this book aims at giving a brief outline of the early days of the church, indicating within that history the points at which the New Testament books came to be written, and also at showing how those books have been transmitted through the centuries to our own day. Four chapters deal with the first point, and three with the second. In addition, there are several maps and illustrative diagrams, and from time to time the author inserts brief paragraphs in small type in order to give expression to views different from his own.

The book is very carefully and attractively produced, and moves so swiftly (as indeed it must) that the reader's interest is never allowed to lapse. Nevertheless, some points of criticism are called for. The treatment is so brief that many views and opinions had of necessity to be overlooked; let it be said that the author has triumphed gallantly over this limitation, but the fact still remains that the value of the work is considerably diminished on this account. The dust cover hints at the value of the book for theological students; it is to be hoped that such men will acquaint themselves with much more than is found in these pages. Moreover, some of the diagrams will not be easily understood by the layman, coming to the subject for the first time, whilst they will tend to be superfluous for those who have read more widely. But the real problem is whether the kind of person for whom this work is written will ever spend so much on such a slim volume. If it could have been produced with a paper back, and possibly without the maps and diagrams (which add little to the clarity but much to the cost), it would doubtless have had a wider and more successful appeal.

A. GILMORE