

Reviews

Group Dynamics in Evangelism, by Paul M. Miller. (Herald Press, Scottdale, Penn., \$3.50).

Having made various experiments for the past ten years in House-Group work as a method of evangelism, I read with special interest Paul M. Miller's book. Personal evangelism, visitation evangelism, mass evangelism, all have their place, but have we yet realized that Christian fellowship itself is the most potent method? "Christians need to be informed that Christian fellowship does have evangelistic power. Many Christians do not realize this." Because Christ is present in the Christian group, and His love is embodied in its personal relationships, it can act like a magnet on "them that are without" and meet all their basic human needs. Because the approach is gradual and indirect, resistance to the Gospel can be overcome, and the convert "already has a made-to-order group in which to begin to grow in his Christian life." In chapters one to eight there is a general discussion of the methods and aims, the problems and the leadership of the small Christian group; but it is probable that most readers will find the last two chapters of greatest value. Here the New Testament *koinonia* is described, and the reasons why it is a powerful evangelistic force and agency are given. Some indication is given on how to prepare a congregation for fellowship evangelism, which "means throwing Christian friendship and fellowship around unchurched people through the group life of the church." Ministers and laymen concerned with the task of evangelism will find this book suggestive, stimulating and helpful.

STEPHEN WINWARD.

Principles and Practice of Preaching, by Ilion T. Jones. (Independent Press, London, 17s. 6d.).

Whenever preachers congregate, "sermons" is a popular topic of conversation, and there is much in this book to stimulate that kind of conversation. Written for the experienced preacher who wishes to re-study his methods, as well as for the young man just beginning his ministry, the preacher who reads it carefully will find his vision of his task enlarged. He will want to keep it on his shelves and to look at it often. After an opening chapter on the purpose and importance of preaching, there follow sections on planning, prepar-

ing and preaching a sermon, together with a conclusion on building up a reservoir of material.

This last section is of special importance, for the American approach to planning one's sermons well ahead, so as to ensure a carefully-balanced diet for one's hearers, and so as to avoid the worst effects of hand-to-mouth preaching, is in advance of much pulpit work in this country. Several specific suggestions are made for series and courses of sermons. Other sermonic suggestions may also be found throughout the remainder of the work.

Another good section is the one on the right and wrong approaches to Biblical preaching, exposing many failures which we hope do not exist but which we fear do; worthy also of note are the sections dealing with types of outlines, the study of which would bring variety of approach to many a preacher, and the one on methods of delivery. There are twelve pages of bibliography at the end, and each section concludes with a few suggestions for further reading.

Some comments savour more of the American scene than of the British, as for instance where we are told that the preacher sees enough fruit from his efforts to know that spiritual transformations take place consistently in those who listen to sermons on soul illnesses (p. 27), and in the suggestion that ideas come trooping into the preacher's mind (p. 25). This is probably true also of the enthusiasm for catchy subject titles. If anything, there are too many quotations, and the author would do well to take his own advice on p. 146 where he deals with the wise use of quotations in sermons, while words like "reconciliation" (p. 46) and "laxness" (p. 59) jar a little on the British ear. But these are niggling criticisms in a work which is extremely good and helpful, which has refreshed the soul of the reviewer as he has read it, and which will most surely do the same for many others.

A. GILMORE.

Study Notes on Romans, by J. R. C. Perkin. (Carey Kingsgate Press, London, 4s. 6d.).

No church could fail to benefit from a study of Paul's letter to the Romans and these well-balanced study notes which Dr. Perkin has succeeded in providing in eight short chapters ought to be widely used as an aid to such study. Naturally their size demands that much be passed over with little or no comment, and no two persons will entirely agree as to what should have been put in or left out, but the great value of the book is that it helps us to see the Epistle as a whole. Although ministers will find little new in it, they will no doubt find it useful to be reminded of the broad and comprehensive sweep of Paul's thought and of the natural divisions in the letter which Dr. Perkin brings out so clearly. The general reader will find it of inestimable value as a guide and introduction

though he may be puzzled by such unexplained phrases as "semi-*gnostic heretics*" on p. 82, and he would have been helped more if the Greek words had been printed in English characters.

It is to the credit of the author that he faces the difficulties of Romans squarely and is not afraid to admit the weakness of Paul's argument in such passages as ix. 19-21. Where there are differences of interpretation he presents fairly and clearly the various points of view and often leaves the ultimate choice to the reader.

The questions at the end of each chapter are reminiscent of college exam. papers and we may wonder how many people will be prepared to provide written answers. The purpose might have been better served if the questions had been designed to stimulate discussion on the letter and its relevance to contemporary situations.

It is good to have such a useful book available at such a modest price.

H. MOWVLEY.

Early Sites of Christianity, by Peter Bann. (Faber & Faber, London, 21s.).

This is a readable travel book by a German surgeon, illustrated with a number of excellent photographs. The author begins his story at the Rome airport as his plane takes off for Athens, and he then successively describes Athens and Greece, Mount Athos, Istanbul, his journey through Asia Minor to Antioch, the Lebanon, Damascus, thence by bus across to Baghdad and from there to Ur and Babylon, and finally to Jerusalem and Sinai. The account is embellished with observations and reflections, bits of history, and descriptions of monasteries, scenes and people of today. The interest of the reader is well held throughout, and he will rise from the reading of the book instructed in many things and with a more vivid impression of scenes which formed the background of Biblical incidents. In the introduction the author expresses the somewhat naïve suggestion that Adam's tomb may one day be found by the excavator, though he admits that it is unlikely. This is a masterly understatement. The publishers say that the book has been a best-seller on the Continent, and it may be expected to have a wide sale in this country.

H. H. ROWLEY.

Whitehead's Metaphysics, by Ivor Leclerc. (George Allen & Unwin, London, 21s.).

Most philosophers, in this country at any rate, have for some time tended to treat Whitehead the metaphysician much as plain men treat Shakespeare or the Bible. They speak of him with respect, but they do not read him. There are some signs, however, that the philosophical climate is becoming more congenial to metaphysics,

and so it is possible that, any time now, reverence for the great man will give place to a lively and critical interest in what he actually said. Dr. Leclerc, who is lecturer in Philosophy at Glasgow University, has written what he describes as "an introductory exposition" of Whitehead's metaphysical theories, as these appear in his later writings, particularly *Process and Reality*, *Adventures of Ideas*, and *Modes of Thought*.

Whitehead's metaphysics arose from his earlier preoccupation with the logic of science, especially from the task, which he set himself, "of developing a new concept of ultimate fact to replace the scientific concept of simply located particles of matter"; but Dr. Leclerc maintains that Whitehead fully recognized this for what it was: "a specifically philosophical; more precisely . . . a metaphysical" task, and not a mere extension of the scientific inquiries which he had been conducting. "We can only form such a conception," said Whitehead, "in terms of fundamental notions concerning the nature of reality. We are thrown back upon philosophy" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p. 203). The special interest of the author lies in the new way in which Whitehead posed traditional philosophical questions, and so was led to original and novel answers.

So far as your reviewer is competent to judge, this seems to be a faithful representation of Whitehead's thought. The book is certainly written in a readable and, so far as its subject-matter allows, readily comprehensible style. Most ministers and students have dipped into Whitehead; if they wish to go beyond that, they could not do better than start with Dr. Leclerc's introduction. He promises that another book is to follow, in which he will offer a critical examination and assessment of Whitehead's metaphysics.

W. D. HUDSON.

At Sundry Times. An Essay in the Comparison of Religion, by R. C. Zaehner. (Faber & Faber, 21s.).

An electronic brain, translating English into Russian, is said to have rendered "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" by a sentence meaning "the whisky is agreeable but the meat has gone bad." This book by the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford is strong meat, but its spirit is extremely agreeable!

The work is an expansion of five lectures delivered in 1957 before the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth, together with an appendix on the Qur'anic conception of the mission and nature of Jesus Christ. Much ground is carefully covered in a limpid style, and there is a wealth of clarifying, not clogging, quotation. This is a volume to be considered by the expert and enjoyed by the layman alike. For it is as timely as it is stimulating.

There has been an increasing recognition of late that Christianity must come to grips in a new way with the great non-Christian religions of the world, which so far from being moribund, as commonly supposed only a few decades ago, have recently proved themselves capable of great resurgent power—though whether this is to be understood in terms of cultural renaissance rather than of religious revival has yet to be established. Such a “coming to grips” obviously calls for a fuller and sustained effort honestly to understand. But will it mean grappling with honoured foes or embracing helpful friends? Does Christ stand over against all religions, including Christianity, or is He the fulfilment of the true but partial insights of all the great historic faiths?

Dr. Hendrik Kraemer has strikingly asserted that the real encounter of the Christian faith and the world's religions is only just beginning. He too has challenged Christians to a far greater discipline of thought and action. But whereas Dr. Kraemer passes judgment upon all religions from the standpoint of “Biblical realism,” Professor Zaehner, who respects the former's uncompromising faith, yet seeks to prove a contrary thesis. His contribution is similarly important because he also is uncompromising about the essentials of the Christian faith, accepting, for example, the doctrine of the Fall, the scandal of the Cross, the reality of the Atonement, and the vital significance of the Resurrection. The great debate continues.

The Christian starts with the idea of God; Hindu and Buddhist start with the idea of the human soul. The only common ground is a concern with eternity. Israel and India clearly differentiate the prophetic and mystical types of religion, while Islam has the supreme claim to *Biblical* realism! Professor Zaehner seeks to show how Christ fulfils not only the law and prophets in Israel, and the hopes of Zoroaster in Iran, but also the mystic tradition of India as finally expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita and the Bodhisattva doctrine.

VICTOR E. W. HAYWARD.

Responsive Praises and Prayers for Minister and Congregation, by Stephen F. Winward. (Hodder & Stoughton, limp cloth, 2s. 6d.).

It has often been ruefully admitted during the last few years that the liturgical revival is leaving the Free Churches behind. The Parish Communion movement is now firmly established in the Church of England, while the Catholics are adopting Dialogue Mass, yet we, the champions of religious democracy, are obliged by our form of service to leave everything to the minister, while the congregation's only opportunity of joining in is by means of the hymns. A congregation cannot take part unless they have a copy of the words being used in front of them.

Mr. Winward's excellent little book goes far to supply this lack, and it is published at a price which makes it possible for most churches to consider buying it in bulk. It is classical in feeling and catholic in selection. Much of it will receive unqualified welcome from all Baptists, but its use of creeds and litanies may cause others to feel that some parts of it could not be used with comfort in Baptist churches.

The Psalms have traditionally been used for responsive reading, and the large selection here is fully justified. The Canticles fall into the same category. The selection of prayers of adoration, confession and supplication is sufficiently wide that over-familiarity and parrot-like repetition can easily be avoided. The uses of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds will be occasional in most churches, but Mr. Winward supplies alternative confessions of faith in the words of scripture. The responsive devotions covering the Christian Year are especially welcome.

DENIS LANT.

When Christ Comes and Comes Again, by T. F. Torrance. (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 12s. 6d.)

The sixteen sermons in this book are not offered as examples of the art of preaching. They have been shorn of illustration and rewritten in the hope that they may help preachers to examine the content of their sermons. Preaching is sometimes judged, for good or ill, according to whether its method and technique fall in with those conventionally associated with the "evangelical tradition." Those very techniques may fetter the Word of God or cover a very thin presentation of it.

Thus, though the title might suggest that this book is occupied with but one or two aspects of the Gospel, the addresses range over the broad canvas of human need and God's answer to that need in the saving work of Christ. As one would expect the author strikes the classic notes of Reformed theology. He shows the wholeness needed in preaching which is truly evangelical. Old and New Testaments, Word and Sacrament, Worship and life, find their proper integration here.

We need not follow Dr. Torrance in all he says in order to appreciate the strength of these sermons. There are the inconsistencies unavoidable for an evangelical paedo-Baptist and, inevitably, other passages also at which one must agree to differ. I question, for example, whether the almost completely negative treatment of Nature on p. 88 does justice to the Hebraic point of view.

These things apart, however, this is quality material and should feed preachers' souls as well as sermons.

G. W. RUSLING

The Music of Christian Hymnody, by Erik Routley. (Independent Press, London, 30s.)

With his new book on the history of the hymn-tune, Dr. Erik Routley again places church musicians in his debt. Starting with the Lutheran Chorale, he traces the course of this "homely" art-form up to the present day, and to the most recent hymn book—the Revised (1950) Ancient and Modern, and the B.B.C. Hymn Book of 1951. Written mainly from the standpoint of English Protestantism, he nonetheless includes chapters on the Hymnody of the Roman Catholic Church, and on Welsh and American Hymnody.

Considering the fact that over one thousand tunes are reviewed, such a plan could easily have resulted in a monotonous catalogue of the names of tunes; but on the contrary, this account always remains fascinating, full of pungent phrases, which convey concisely and graphically the author's meaning. For instance, here is a vivid quotation in which 18th-century Methodist music is put in its place—"the notable facility with which this flamboyant but trivial music by-passes the intellect and induces a false sense of spiritual well-being." The author's assessments of composers and their styles are equally shrewd and penetrating.

Dr. Routley provides two hundred music examples of less accessible tunes, and with the additional aid of the 1933 edition of *The English Hymnal*, the story can be followed quite easily.

Baptists will naturally be interested to hear the author's verdict upon their own hymn book. Here is the sole reference to it: "Nonconformity offers the *Congregational Hymnary* (1916), and the *Baptist Church Hymnal* (1936), both either ignorant or shamelessly reactionary." The Congregational denomination has removed itself from this biting, but at the same time, legitimate censure, by producing the excellent *Congregational Praise* (1951). We can only hope that whoever is responsible for any future new version of the *Baptist Church Hymnal* will have the necessary appreciation of historical perspective, and the musicianship, to produce a volume of praise worthy of a place alongside the other great modern hymn books. I urge all Baptists interested in Church praise to read and digest this admirable book.

K. BARRITT