

Reviews.

Christian Education in a Secular Society, by W. R. Niblett. (Oxford University Press, 132 pp., 12s. 6d.).

The Study and Research Committee of the Institute of Christian Education, which six years ago published its widely discussed report, *Religious Education in Schools*, has been at work since on another problem. It was asked "to examine the practical tasks and objectives of Christian teachers in secondary schools in terms of their school situation, and in the wider contemporary social setting, and to consider how the Christian teacher can build up the attitude of pupils upon Christian foundations such as he himself accepts." Its findings have now been written up by its chairman, Professor W. R. Niblett, in the form of this book: *Christian Education in a Secular Society*.

The problem is one of great importance to all British Christians, and, we believe, to the whole of British society. The community of the school is always a reflection of the total community. In the present situation it is only to be expected that on staffs of secondary schools practising Christians may be in a minority and children of practising Christians a minority among the pupils. The values which the pupils come to accept depend only in part upon what is directly taught. There are the unconscious influences of the home and of society, as well as of the atmosphere of the school. Moreover the Christian teacher has to be concerned not only with Religious Instruction and Worship as affecting the faith of the pupils but also with the way mathematics, science, history, literature, and the arts are taught.

All these matters are admirably discussed by Professor Niblett. And what adds to the usefulness of the book, there are separate treatments of the sixth form, of outside activities, and of the ordinary child. Incidentally, in his chapter on teaching religious knowledge, he has a wise word on the question of the renewed and growing appeal of fundamentalism. His book deserves to be studied and discussed by all ministers and teachers. It makes quite clear the need for hard thinking among Christians on the overriding purpose of all education, and also for a supply of Christian teachers of many subjects other than religious knowledge who understand the importance of their own presuppositions.

A. S. CLEMENT

Saved by His Life, by Theodore R. Clark. (The Macmillan Co., New York, pp. xvi. + 220, 27s. 6d.).

The sub-title of this book is, "A Study of the New Testament Doctrine of Reconciliation and Salvation," but its avowed main purpose is to call attention to the place held in the thinking of New

Testament writers by the Resurrection of Christ. The author holds that "the theological significance of the Resurrection has never yet been studied adequately or taken seriously by Christian theologians" (pp. xi, 72). O Ramsey, where art thou?

A more accurate description would be, "An essay on Salvation in Christian Theology": after an opening chapter on "Man against God," which leans heavily on Tillich, the traditional theories of the Atonement are criticised for isolating the Cross from the "Total Event" of God's work in Christ, and during this treatment a number of popular hymns fall under the same condemnation.

The choice of hymns—"What can wash away my sin?" and "The Old Rugged Cross" are examples—remind us forcibly of the American scene out of which the author speaks, as does such language as, "With the general constellation of ideas presented above in mind, we are now ready to turn our analytical spotlight and synthetical floodlight upon the New Testament message itself." Unfortunately neither light is very illuminating, and the exegesis offered is often facile, not to say naïve. Take, for example, this on *Gal.* iii. 13 (p. 184): "This is a difficult passage and has elicited no end of discussion, to which this present discussion must be added. . . . Perhaps Paul means by the 'curse of the law' little more than Jesus' involvement in human life and subjection to the laws of God for man. In other words, the phrase 'curse of the law' may have been Paul's way of speaking of the Incarnation, as far as Jesus and his Cross were concerned." Or this, on *Mk.* xiv. 22f and parallels (p. 24): "Here Jesus is reported to have said that his body would be broken and his blood shed for the remission of their sins. The bread and wine were evidently used as a kind of object lesson by which Jesus attempted to illustrate his teachings at this point." The author, who has been Associate Professor of Theology at New Orleans Theological Seminary since 1949, is not afraid of generalising. With reference to 1 *Cor.* xii. 13, he declares there is no hint here—or in the rest of the New Testament—"that Paul thought of water-baptism as such as being a pre-requisite to membership in the Church" (p. 147). And he can affirm the neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit "in all ages of the Church, except perhaps in the present age" (p. 21).

But there, neither is he afraid to describe the preaching of a well-known pastor as a "verbal sideshow." Professor Clark is to be commended in his passionate desire to see the Church he loves liberated from a "Jesusolatry" which wants to follow a figure of the past through Galilee, from a "biblicism" which binds God's Word and from a secondhand faith which merely accepts the propositions of peddlers of the message. If only this were matched by a corresponding insight into the theology of the New Testament.

MAURICE F. WILLIAMS

A Book of Services and Prayers. (Independent Press, 335 pp., 13s. 6d.).

Perhaps a Baptist may be forgiven for looking first at the Baptismal Service in a Congregational Manual. In this form, the minister, having baptized the child, says: "We receive this child into the Congregation of Christ's flock, in the trust that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ." The first phrase is from the Book of Common Prayer and one wonders how happy Congregationalists can be in using it and believing in the gathered church.

The form of Communion also suggests the Book of Common Prayer much more strongly than older Manuals, though there is a second, and less formal, order.

The Committee have, on the whole, done an admirable job in producing this book. There is a fine selection of prayers from many sources, five Orders for Morning Service, two for Evening, and a useful section of "Services for Special Occasions."

The weakest part of such books always seems to be the suggestions for opening worship. A "Call to Worship," consisting of disconnected sentences is to be followed by a hymn, which will not necessarily connect with the sentences or the prayer which follows. The writer once heard a minister open a service by saying: "'The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him.' We'll sing hymn number . . ." Surely the hymn should come first (except perhaps at Communion, where more can be assumed) to weld the congregation together. Then a passage of Scripture, inspired by the hymn and leading into the prayer. Thus "I to the hills will lift mine eyes" may be followed by Psalm 125 (1 and 2) leading into a prayer of worship and invocation based on God's eternal strength. Or "Ye holy angels bright" can be followed by *Heb. xii.* (18 and 19: 22-25a) and a prayer linking our worship with that of the church militant and triumphant, and with that of angels and archangels. It is a pity that the books are not pointing us past this haphazard stage at this point.

DENIS LANT

The So-called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus, by Paul Althaus (translated by David Cairns). (Oliver & Boyd, 89 pp. 9s. 6d.).

We live in an era of fierce debates and much hostility. The theological realm is not exempt! Bultmann's attempt to remove from the Gospel the symbols and conceptions of the first century so that by this process of "demythologising" the proclamation of the Gospel in the twentieth century might become more effective is an illustration. Yet the acute debate has tended to obscure another challenge of Bultmann's position; the challenge is taken up by Professor P. Althaus of Erlangen.

The problem is that of the place of the historicity of Jesus in the Christian proclamation. In his *Theology of the New Testament*, Bultmann writes only a few pages on the message of Jesus; he passes quickly to the kerygma of the "earliest church," and then of "the hellenistic church." Professor Althaus argues that this emphasis on the kerygma was necessary over against the older liberal theology, but the emphasis has now been made in such an extreme way as to fall into the opposite error. "The kerygma and the historical Jesus are torn apart, and the importance of the latter is minimised in comparison with the kerygma."

The position derives from the work of Martin Kähler in the nineteenth century, and is supported today on the basis of a philosophy of history by Friedrich Gogarten, but Professor Althaus rejects it, arguing that the Christian faith rests on "witnessed history."

The heart of the book is a stimulating chapter on "The problem of certainty in historical knowledge." Here it is argued that faith must enquire about the genuine historicity of the story of Jesus Christ, yet faith does not derive from historical studies. It is admitted that historical research cannot answer all questions about the historicity of Jesus, though Bultmann's statement "that we can know today practically nothing of the life and personality of Jesus" is rejected; yet it is also argued that the fundamental characteristics of Jesus' ministry and personality have been preserved through all layers of the Gospel tradition, so that we are able to gain a reliable picture of Him. This historical account, reliable though it may be, is necessary for faith, yet is not the origin of faith. All men may know about the historical Jesus, but faith in the Son of God arises through "the miracle of the Holy Spirit." The fact that Jesus has His place in history, and, as such, can only be reached through historical tradition and historical witnesses, implies that there is always an element of *fides humana* included in our certainty about the Jesus Christ of the kerygma. It certainly must be sharply distinguished from the *fides divina*, the certainty of a faith concerning the presence of God and His salvation in the history to which the kerygma bears witness. The *fides humana* can never create the *fides divina*, but the latter is never without the former." That is well said, and it is needed comment on some theological formulations which are fundamentally ancient docetism expressed in the complex terminology of present day theology.

From all this a practical question emerges. "Where is there a firm foundation for the theological layman, the non-specialist who is seeking for a foundation of his faith in Christ?" Professor Althaus thus raises a question which many members of the church are asking out of their bewilderment in the face of much theological discussion; he gives merely the hint of an answer. Yet an answer is needed.

Biblical exegesis and theological reflection should help the Christian believer to understand the faith more clearly and the Christian preacher to proclaim it more powerfully. Measured by this standard, much contemporary exegesis and reflection must be judged a failure. The involved discussions about baptism are an example, for as more books and papers are produced, there is a danger that both the doctrine and the practice will become incomprehensible to the non-specialist. If Christianity rests upon the incarnation, the believer who is not a theological specialist has a right to ask for an assurance, in terms which he can understand, of the historical basis of his faith, and of its relationship to the eternal. This is at least one practical implication of the important question raised in this book.

L. G. CHAMPION

The Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan. Edited by James Blanton Wharey, revised by Roger Sharrock. (Clarendon Press : Oxford University Press, pp. cxviii, 365. 63s.).

The original edition of this book in the Oxford English Texts (1928) will be familiar to some readers. Here is a completely revised and augmented edition by Roger Sharrock, who has built on Wharey's work and attempted the establishment of a sound text. Whereas Wharey worked on the third edition (1679), Sharrock has gone back to the first (1678). Additions to the text are mentioned when dealing with the earliest editions in which they are found.

The revised introduction contains a new section on the date when *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written, and here there is a return to the traditional view that it belongs to the first and major imprisonment. This traditional view has been gaining ground in recent years and it is useful to have the most up-to-date evidence surveyed and judged in an authoritative work such as this. Other additions are an explanation of the choice of copy text and a Commentary.

The production is of the quality one would expect from such publishers and students of Bunyan will be grateful to both publishers and editor for a very fine piece of work.

A. GILMORE

Your Child and the Church, by J. O. Barrett. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 12 pp. 1st. 1960).

This booklet is designed to be put into the hands of parents who seek for their children the Service of Infant Blessing. It provides an Order of Service, an explanation of its meaning and purpose, a reminder of parental responsibility during a child's formative years, and some practical suggestions as to how such responsibility may adequately be discharged. The whole is contained within little more than seven pages.

The counsel is wise and the intention good. Something of this kind has for long been needed, and it will surely be widely used. But

the extent of its usefulness may perhaps be circumscribed by the decision to write it round an Order of Service. This creates no problems for those who accept Mr. Barrett's Order as adequate and satisfactory. It embarrasses those who have misgivings at this point.

For the underlying theology is far from clear. The Service is divided into the two parts familiar to us; the one concerned with the blessing of the child, the other with the promises and dedication of the parents. The second demands the Christian home, profession, and discipleship; the first is based upon our Lord's welcome and blessing of children as such, irrespective apparently of any religious criteria or differentia. The second would limit the Service to the children of Christian parents; the first would seem to indicate, or at least justify, indiscriminate reception. Here is the heart of our present theological confusion. It would be unfortunate if this booklet were to underline our impasse and spread our perplexity by thus throwing together conflicting material.

To suggest an alternative way would demand space that is not available. But at least it may be urged that ministers holding this Service in this form should think out clearly what they are doing. And if we adjudge this booklet premature, we recognize the force of the author's undoubted retort that the need for something of this kind was urgent.

N. CLARK

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Eric Thiman (ed.), *Congregational Anthem Book*. 98 anthems. 438 pp. 27s. 6d. Independent Press.
- Edgar H. Brookes, *The City of God and the Politics of Crisis*. 111 pp. 10s. 6d. Oxford University Press.
- John Baker, *The Approach to Calvary*. 66 pp. 6s. 6d. Independent Press.
- Paul Hessert, *Introduction to Christianity*. 383 pp. 30s. Geo. Allen & Unwin.
- E. L. Allen, *Christianity Among the Nations*. 159 pp. 18s. Geo. Allen & Unwin.
- W. A. Whitehouse, *Order, Goodness, Glory*. 83 pp. 9s. 6d. Oxford University Press.
- Robert Harvey, *The Hidden Word*. 104 pp. 7s. 6d. Independent Press.
- B. A. Pauw, *Religion in a Tswana Chieftdom*. 258 pp. 38s. Oxford University Press.
- J. Trevor Davies, *Is Anyone There?* 169 pp. 10s. 6d. Independent Press.
- A. E. Gould, *Shop-soiled Slogans*. 19 pp. 1s. 3d. Independent Press.
- Roy McKay, *Heaven and Charing Cross*. 15 pp. 1s. 3d. Independent Press.
- The Pilgrim's Progress*. A Film Strip and Notes. Educational Productions.