

Reviews

THE BIBLE IN OUR TIME

E. H. Robertson must have had a most interesting time travelling all over the world as Study Secretary of the United Bible Societies, and there is already evidence to show that he is going to put the wealth of his experience at the disposal of the church. *The Recovery of Confidence*¹ is the first of a series of pamphlets to be published under the general heading, "The Bible in Our Time," and Mr. Robertson sums up the general results of his work by saying that the picture that emerges is of the Bible as a highly respected book whose prestige in recent years has greatly risen, but whose use by the majority of its admirers is very limited. He nevertheless points out that there are flashes of rediscovery across this sombre picture, and some of them come out in this work, as for instance when he incidentally raises the issue as to whether our churches try to do too much: he doesn't raise it like that of course. He simply points out that when Hitler closed the youth groups and stopped the church's social work he left the young people with only their Bibles. Do people only ever see the important when they are forcibly prevented from the unimportant? Many will regret that the problems of the student world are not tackled more fully, but this booklet augurs well for the series as a whole and we must be patient before pointing out what appear to be omissions.

Another sign of the revived interest in the Bible is the republication of old material and the dressing up of scholarly material for the layman. We have two examples before us. *The Synoptic Gospels*² by J. H. Ropes is a new impression of a book first published in 1934. In 1949 R. H. Lightfoot expressed his indebtedness to it and deplored the comparative neglect from which it had suffered. The Oxford University Press has now re-issued it in a paper-back edition, with a preface by D. E. Nineham.

On the whole Ropes accepted the principles of source criticism but went on to ask what the writer was seeking to do with his sources. *Mark*, he concluded, was a theological gospel comparable with *John*, the writer addressing himself to the problem, Why did the Messiah die? Matthew's purpose was historical, the writer seeking to provide for Christians a systematic compendium or handbook of what was known about the deeds and words of the founder of the Christian Church, and he has a very clear division of the Gospel into sections. *Luke* can only be read as a biography. There is some useful new thinking here that many a man will find refreshing

¹ S.C.M. Press, 4s.

² Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d.

whether he is studying the Gospels for the first time or brushing up his knowledge.

In 1957 the Four Gospels was the subject of an International Congress of New Testament scholars at Oxford. The publicity which the Congress received showed that its findings were of interest to clergy, ministers, teachers of divinity and laymen as well as to the scholars concerned, and this has now prompted Blackwell to issue a selection of the papers (previously all published in *Studia Evangelica*) at a price within the reach of many who were not able to buy the larger volume.³ No summary of the contributions is possible or necessary, for they have already made their appeal. Altogether 16 papers (two of them in French) are found here, and the contributors include H. Cunliffe-Jones, A. M. Ramsey, B. Reicke, H. Riesefeld and J. A. T. Robinson. Many ministers will want to have this valuable collection of material on their shelves and many more will want to see that it is in their local library.

A. GILMORE

The Life and Works of Edmund Bishop, by Nigel Abercrombie, 539 pp. (Longman's, Green & Co., London, 70s.).

The subject of this meticulous volume was a self-taught, liturgical scholar of native genius and immense learning who was born in 1846 and died in 1917. A convert to Roman Catholicism, he gave up a comfortable Civil Service post to become a postulant among the monks of the Downside community. Eventually deciding against becoming a monk himself, however, he devoted the rest of his life, on a pension of £150 a year, to historical research. In the process he acquired a rare erudition and a lasting name in the field of liturgical studies. On a number of occasions, some of them connected with developments at Downside, he exerted a quiet but considerable influence in Roman Catholic affairs in England. As Professor David Knowles declares in his foreword, Bishop was "a scholar-pioneer, an intuitive genius who was able also to say on many things the last word." Recognition of his mastery over his chosen field of learning has grown with the passing of the years.

A life spent among books, papers and ancient manuscripts, however, does not easily lend itself to biography and it may be questionable whether it was really necessary to trace in such detail, as does this volume, the unexciting and almost day to day movements of a scholar whose chief activities consisted in pursuing research in libraries and museums and writing down his conclusions for publication in learned journals. One would think that to have supplied a brief outline of the man's life, a bibliography of his

³ *The Gospels Reconsidered*. 27s. 6d.

works and an appraisal of his achievement would have been sufficient.

By the nature of things the life of a Roman Catholic liturgical authority contains little of immediate interest to Baptists. Here and there, however, some of Bishop's opinions—with the weight of his almost unequalled knowledge behind them—catch one's notice. In view of certain trends within Anglicanism today and of recent discussions between the Free Churches and the Church of England it is interesting to note how one who was both a Roman Catholic and an authority viewed certain features of the Anglican Church. Of the Book of Common Prayer Bishop declared that the men who drew it up professed a teaching which was "precisely Calvin's" and that it was compiled to substitute for the Mass "a Calvinist sort of communion service." What the Tractarians did, he observes, was to introduce "a kind of Lutheran system," which was later dropped by the Anglo-Catholics "in favour of a bastard kind of Transubstantiationism." Writing at a time when the then Lord Halifax and his party were making overtures to Roman Catholicism, Bishop declares that Anglican Orders are invalid. No one, he states, has ever found "any proof or record of the consecration of the bishop from whom the clergy of the Church of England derives 'succession' (if any)." Anglicans, on the other hand, recognised throughout the 17th and 18th centuries the Orders of ministers of the continental Reformed churches as valid, on the same footing as their own. Interesting, too, is his statement that, generally speaking, an Independent or Wesleyan chapel of the present day must be ritualistic in comparison with the Anglican services in the reign of Elizabeth. Bishop was an Englishman and he understood the Englishman's religion far better than many of his fellow Catholics. This, he said, was essentially Puritan, depending in large measure on its simplicity and "above all to the direct relation between the creature and his Creator." Here, then, is a painstakingly detailed, authoritative and scholarly account of the life and achievement of a man of great learning and influence which, at the same time, throws light on the history of the Downside community in particular and of English Catholicism in general.

GRAHAM W. HUGHES

An Introduction to Christian Doctrine, by T. E. Jessop. (Thomas Nelson, 133 pp., 12s. 6d.).

Those acquainted with the pamphlets on Christian Belief written by Professor Jessop for the Mission to the Royal Air Force will not be surprised to find this attractively produced Introduction written with a competence, clarity and conciseness to meet the needs of

those for whom it is intended. The author says that it stands between the popular expositions of Christian belief and examination text books intended for students. Its style and method match its purpose. The main doctrines are presented clearly, controversies around them are indicated and a balanced assessment of the issues made. No quotations from other works are included, the whole being written in Professor Jessop's readable and trenchant style. Minimum use is made of technical terms, and where they are employed a brief explanation is usually appended.

A brief consideration of the nature of religion ("there is no such thing as religion-in-general; there are only particular religions"), and a sketch of the Jewish background, are followed by a few pages of Natural Theology which include the reminder that the practical proof of the reality of God is not that He is inferred, but met. The succeeding chapters cover the normal range of doctrinal subjects. The equal importance of a doctrine of the Incarnation with that of the Cross is emphasized. The significance of the natural man is stressed, underlining that it is not necessary to condemn what God as Creator gave us in order to emphasize what He gives us by Grace. Concerning the Saving Work of Christ, a salutary warning is included against shaping the whole Christian doctrine on the parable of the Prodigal Son, "for Jesus Himself is not in it." The chapter on the Church, though the author says he found it the hardest to write, is an admirable contribution, doing justice to the differing emphases of the various Christian Communion. The paragraphs on Judgement, Heaven and Hell are particularly candid, and a timely warning of the peril of being so preoccupied with Christ's Second Coming as to underrate His first is given.

In one instance the interests of compression leave a false impression. On page 54 the author might seem to suggest that perfection is reached if motives are sound though actions may be mistaken through ignorance of fact or error of judgment. The clarity of the chapter on the Holy Spirit is not enhanced by the statement "From this point of view we might speak of the Spirit as the divine Vicar of Christ, in the sense of acting *for* Him. It is unfortunate that the term has become attached as a title to a human being, the Pope."

The book concludes with an admirable chapter in which the Historic Creeds are printed with comments on the reason for and circumstances of their origin. Further material for those stimulated by this excellent Introduction is indicated in an extensive Bibliography. The book is eminently suitable for study groups of young church members and for intelligent enquirers of any age.

A. ELLIS MOLD

The Living World of the New Testament, by Howard Clark Kee and Franklin W. Young. (Darton, Longman and Todd, 492 pp., 25s.).

This book was first published in the U.S.A. in 1957 under the title "Understanding the New Testament." Each title is significant, for the book deals with both the Scriptures and the Culture of the New Testament period, in 470 pages of fairly close print interspersed with 56 clear illustrations and 11 useful maps. Obviously this is very good measure for 25s., and the quality of the work is just as good. It is abreast of contemporary scholarship, as evidenced in the text and the book-list on each of the fifteen chapters. (It should be added that the Index is fuller than in most books of this kind).

The first two chapters set the Christian fellowship in the midst of the "age of anxiety" in which it was born and indicate its distinctive ethos. The examination of the convictions of the primitive church takes us back in the next three chapters to the Ministry and teaching of Jesus, and then in the following chapter we are back again in "The Life of the Earliest Community." Thereafter, in Parts II and III we follow the expansion and maturing of the Community. The book is useful as a commentary on much of the New Testament literature. The Synoptic Gospels form the background of the three chapters on the Ministry, whilst the Gospel of John is succinctly interpreted in the 31 pages of chapter 13, entitled "The Community in Rapprochement with the World: I." The following chapter devotes 17 pages to the Epistle to the Hebrews and 13 to 1 Peter. The Book of the Revelation is allotted 11 pages. There are three and a half chapters covering the career of Paul, based on his letters and the story in the Acts. "The living world of the New Testament" includes Greek philosophy (in decline), the Mystery Religions, Jewish parties and sects (the Qumran community is described in word and picture), Jewish Christian sects and Gnosticism (the book was finished too early for any reference to the papyri of Nag Hammadi).

In these days of a somewhat conservative attitude to earlier critical positions regarding the origins of the books of the New Testament, this work tends to maintain the older viewpoints. Thus the Gospel of John is used to illuminate the period about the end of the first century rather than the days of Jesus' ministry. The first Epistle of Peter was written about A.D. 95 to Christians in Asia Minor and represents the "moderate" attitude towards the State as compared with that of Revelation. Ephesians is not Pauline (but Philippians, Colossians and Philemon date from the Roman imprisonment). The radical approach sometimes goes for

the Synoptics as well as the fourth Gospel. The reference to the relationship between the Baptist and Jesus in Luke 1 and 2 is "full of legendary material." The miracles of Jesus are treated with rather negative caution, and as for His teaching we are nearest to it in the parables. Passages in the Synoptic Gospels which stress Pilate's reluctance to condemn Jesus "have no foundation in fact" but are due to the later attempt of the church to lay the blame for the crucifixion on the Jews and to exonerate Rome. The "words of institution" in 1 Cor. 11 are attributed to Paul rather than to Jesus. On the other side, the reviewer was surprised, even in these days when the Dead Sea Scrolls are quoted to illustrate any aspect of New Testament teaching, to find a quotation on p. 273 from the "Manual of Discipline" in support of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith! (The translation of this passage depends partly on the punctuation which the original does not supply. A simple shift of a full stop in the translation quoted could make the passage teach a doctrine of justification by works).

This is a stimulating book, equally useful whether one agrees or disagrees with its findings. Often the serious reader will feel compelled to "examine the Scripture to see if these things are so." No doubt the authors will be content with that result, even if sometimes their readers suspect that some of these things are *not* just so.

GEORGE FARR

The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church, by M. F. Wiles. (Cambridge University Press, 1960, 25s., pp. 182).

This book is a careful and scholarly study of the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel by some of the early Fathers, especially Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria; to a lesser extent account is also taken of Gnostic writings, and of the work of Chrysostom and Augustine.

The author keeps rigidly to the scope indicated by the sub-title. Thus, for instance, an introductory section (Commentaries and Commentators), and Chapters I and II (The Authorship and Purpose of the Gospel, and The Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels) are entirely confined to the discussion of these themes in the Early Church, and there is a similar concentration of interest throughout the book.

Chapters III, IV, and V deal with certain outstanding aspects of the content of the Gospel (Historicity and Symbolism: The Signs: Leading Ideas) as these are viewed in patristic commentaries.

There follow three chapters showing how the Gospel fared in

the doctrinal controversies of the early centuries (The Fourth Gospel and the Gnostics: Christological Interpretation in the Third and Fourth Centuries: The Christological Interpretation Exegesis of Theodore and Cyril). Chapter IX (The Gospel of Salvation) deals in the main with the contrasts between Theodore and Cyril on this theme. In an Epilogue (158-161) the author offers an assessment of the work of the chief commentators with whom he has been concerned. Here are some of his comments: On Theodore of Mopsuestia: "For all the honesty of his approach, the directness and practical good sense of many of his comments, his commentary as a whole is a disappointing book. He has attempted to expound the meaning of the Gospel too narrowly within the confines of his own way of thought. To borrow a phrase from Origen, it is as if he has never lain upon the Evangelist's breast; his mind has never found spiritual communion with the mind of St. John, and therefore he cannot reveal the Gospel's most precious secrets to us" (159). On Cyril: "Something of the freshness, the vigour, the theological penetration of Origen has gone; but a sense of balance and good sense has come to check the excesses of the earlier scholar. Cyril's commentary is a profound work of theological interpretation, sustained throughout with a high level of consistency" (160).

A good bibliography and full indices of Scriptural and patristic texts are provided. Of the few recent discussions which the author seems to have missed, one may perhaps mention the essays by Quispel and Laurentin in *L'Évangile de Jean, Études et Problèmes*, (Recherches Bibliques, Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, III, 1958).

This is clearly a book for specialists rather than for general readers, and it has as much to interest students of the doctrinal controversies of the Early Church as students of the New Testament. It is a powerful reminder of the fact that from the early days of the Church the Fourth Gospel was regarded as a carefully written work which called for some subtlety and penetration in its interpretation; it is not simply the ingenuity of modern scholars which represents it as such! At the same time, there are abundant illustration here of the ever-present tendency to read into the New Testament the theological interests and emphases of a later period. "Both writers" (Mr. Wiles comments, on Theodore and Cyril) "are attempting to interpret the Gospel from within a strait-jacket of presuppositions to which the message of the Gospel will not succumb" (136). This kind of error has by no means ceased with the ancient schools of Antioch and Alexandria.

D. R. GRIFFITHS