Reviews

Sunday: Christian and Social Significance, by William Hodgkins. (Independent Press, 238 pp. 21s.). The Day of Light, by H. B. Porter (S.C.M. Press. 86 pp. 7s. 6d.).

These two books are concerned with the Christian Sunday and its significance for worship and life. This concern is the one thing they have in common. Hodgkins' book deals with all the questions which will be debated in churches, clubs, pubs and sports meetings whenever there is the smell of some change in Sunday legislation. Porter's book will be discussed by students of theology and those who talk of liturgy and the worship of the Church. There was a time when the question of Justification by Faith was argued in German beer gardens. I could wish that the patrons of the Red Lion would show some understanding of what Porter is trying to say.

Hodgkins' book is a workmanlike outline reaching from the Old Testament background to a discussion of the future of Sunday. He moves solidly through the history of Sunday telling us something of the way different periods have responded to its appeals and demands. He provides facts which will encourage reasonable discussion and gives suggestions of his own views. He does all this with diligence like a man unwilling to arouse too much excitement. Memories of his boyhood Sundays will allow him to be nothing but sober, although the passing years have made him more prone to yield to social pressure than would have been decent in the days of his fathers. "It has been said that Sunday observance cannot be enforced by legislation but as we examine the influence of various Acts of Parliament it is obvious that successful enforcement is a necessary corollary of the proper functioning of the Church." The question seems to be—How much of Sunday shall we be allowed to keep and what is the best way of going about it?

Sunday, we are told, is "a three-stranded institution." "Firstly, to religion expressed in public worship and private devotions; secondly, to a break in the normal work effort in order to rest; and thirdly, to recreation, sport and entertainment, in which responsibility is lessened and pleasure heightened." The question, as you will see, is not whether we shall observe Sunday or not but what kind of observance we wish to encourage. The strands however will not remain apart and how are we to weave the threefold cord?

Hodgkins tells us that there are three ways possible for the church in the future. The first is "to let the religious and social situation of Sunday continue to evolve in its own way." This will avoid the peril of unwelcome interference by the Church, but will also mean the shelving of social responsibility. The second way "is to organize by every possible means within its (the church's) power a thoroughgoing presentation of Sunday as a day of rest, worship.
and religious education.” Hodgkins, I think, would like this if it were possible and feels it has Scriptural justification. But it is not possible, so like a sensible man he yields! The third way would be for the church “to accept the present social tendencies towards greater freedom of recreation and entertainment and follow the lead given by churches in other countries, notably in Canada and America, and concentrate on making the first part of the day a time devoted to worship, and the second part of the day an opportunity for recreation and entertainment.” The idea is not that there should be a holy bit and a bit not quite so holy but that Sunday should give people an opportunity to offer to God their worship and their recreation. Porter towards the end of his book moves out of the sphere of liturgical worship and decides to tell us what the worshipper can do. Most of the things are gentle, full of family love, neighbourliness and charity. Then he adds this: “He can drive through the countryside on Sunday afternoon, or survey the spires and bridges of the city, and be certain that in his good time God will gather an unperishing harvest from the field and vineyard of the earth.” Fancy that! It reminds me of the Bishop of somewhere at a football match—in the grandstand, of course—waving his umbrella and shouting “An abundantly blessed goal.”

It is clear that there are many views about Sunday which somehow need to be harmonized in our national life. The long tradition with different emphases in various branches of the church and yet more outside; the theologians anxious to show what Sunday really means yet who often write in the language of mystery, with gnostic assurance, so that men of common minds, hearing of their views at many hands removed, find the teaching a thing of confusion; the politician weighing the demands of conscience and the claims of expediency; men and women who somehow like a quiet Sunday and those who fail to understand why they should be bound by archaic Sunday laws. With all this there is the weakening of any abiding tradition and the desire to revolt against the old ways. In this, somewhere, you will find the preacher wondering what to say, communicating his uncertainty to wilting congregations.

I think it may be well to look a little at the sermons of two great preachers: F. D. Maurice and F. W. Robertson. Hodgkins mentions neither and I can only believe that this must be because he has overlooked them. They are significant for us because they both try to think theologically in terms not removed from daily living. They both deal with the Crystal Palace case—concerning the opening of “gardens in the neighbourhood of London in which various objects, allowed to be suitable for contemplation on week-days, may be seen—not only on these days but during part of Sunday—are we bound, as Christians and Englishmen, to protest against that design, and to do what in us lies that it may not be carried into effect?”
F. D. Maurice tries to deal with the question in a radical way. He knows that he must not covet the popularity of people nor minister to the prejudices of “religion.” He attempts to outline the true meaning of “the Sabbath.” His own attitude is strict and disciplined but he will not willingly judge what is right for others. When an Act is passed “making the opening of any places on Sunday penal” he recognizes swiftly the humbug lurking behind an apparent reverence for the Christian faith. “And it is upon this statute, so juvenile, yet so mouldy, that the reverence for the divine day—the godliness of the English nation—henceforth must be understood to depend!” As you would expect he ridicules the Sabbath rest of the rich and uncovers the hidden lives of the poor. You will not find ready-made answers about the Sunday of the future in these sermons but it is honest religion—“Six-sevenths of man’s time are delivered over to Mammon; one-seventh is graciously bestowed upon God. So people believe that they are keeping his ordinances. And how much of our religious teaching countenances the delusion!”

F. W. Robertson also tries to get to the heart of the matter. He did not support the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sunday but he refused to support the arguments of Sabbatarians. He also ridicules... “The two or three hours spent by the aristocrat over champagne, dessert and coffee are no desecration but the same time spent by a labourer over his cheese and beer in merry company will call down the wrath of God. It is worse than absurd.” For Robertson the Sabbath of the Christian is the consecration of all time to God and he leans heavily on Colossians ii. 16, 17 and Romans xiv. 5, 6. He has, I think, a clearer view than Maurice of the true significance of the Christian Sunday. There is a passage where he speaks most movingly. “If the Lord chastens us, if God were to smite us it would not be because we have regarded a particular day as unessential or because we have played and sported and loved recreation even on a day of rest but because we are selfish, preferring pleasure to duty and Traffic to honour, evil to good, our church more than our faith and our faith more than truth.” I quote mainly from memory but that is what Robertson said!

I shall not now deal with possible future legislation. In the long run that will take its form from the value we are able to give to the day. If we fail to show its possible beauty and charm, avoiding both legalism and licence, then we shall get the kind of Sunday we deserve. The opportunities for enjoying Sunday will depend a great deal on legislation but there are some things that should be clear to Christians whatever their circumstances may be.

It will do us no harm to look again at the Jewish Sabbath. This, after all, was the Sabbath of Jesus, and we have so emphasized some of his sayings that we forget that it was a festival he cele-
brated. It is not that we can ascribe our Lord's teaching to ignorance or an absence of understanding. We must recognize that the claims of the Kingdom of God override all Sabbath rules but in doing this we must not ignore the beauty of the day in Jewish thought. This is how Herman Wouk puts it—"The Sabbath is a bride, and nightfall the wedding hour, so that every Friday at dusk pious Jews read the sparkling love poetry of the Song of Songs. . . . The Sabbath is the seal of partnership between God and man in the rule of creation. . . . The Sabbath is the beginning of man's imitation of God. . . . The Sabbath is a day in our time of the Messianic era, a foretaste of the coming peace between man and God, man and nature, man and man. . . ." A day of peace, of discipline, of joy, of communion with God and fellowship with men.

Now this is the strength of Porter's book. He tells us of the Day of Light. It is the day—the first day (or the eighth day) when God went to work as a labourer and gave us the gift of creation. It is the first day and on that day the Lord rose from the grave. It is the day when he first appeared to his disciples after the resurrection. It is the day of the Holy Spirit; the day of worship, of the giving of the good news, of the breaking of bread and the taking of the cup. It is the day when heaven and earth meet and angels and archangels join with men and cry "Holy, Holy, Holy . . ." It is, you see, a day of light and joy. For the Jew the Sabbath became a burden rather than a delight simply because of the sheer demand of utter obedience. For the Christian the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath—it is his way and life we celebrate and this cannot be enchained by any Laws for it breaks out in a new mercy and justice. We are not called upon to preserve some ancient law but to respond gladly to the free gift of grace. Christians who respond with joy to what God has done will influence legislation more than they dream. But if not—then they will celebrate because of sheer thanksgiving. They will not covet the pleasure of imposing obedience on others nor think of religion enclosed in a narrow gully. The Sunday joy will lead to fulness of life in worship, work and play.

"So let none take you to task on questions of eating and drinking or in connection with observance of festivals or new moons or Sabbaths. All that is the mere shadow of what is to be; the substance belongs to Christ." (Col. ii. 16, 17. Moffatt).

Howard Williams

The Ancient Near East. James Pritchard (ed.). An anthology of texts and pictures. (Oxford University Press. 380 pp. 40s.)

In the middle fifties two volumes edited by James B. Pritchard, Professor of Old Testament Literature at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, California, were published under the
titles, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (2nd edition) and *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Both proved invaluable tools in the teaching of the Old Testament, but on account of their erudition and scope, not to mention their price, they were beyond the use of all but the most learned. Lecturers in training colleges, school teachers and working ministers, as well as students and lay people, needed something simpler on the same lines.

So it was that this volume came to be published, selecting from the larger works, and keeping a special eye on the relevance of the texts to the Old Testament. The result is indeed *multum in parvo* and pleasantly produced. The texts cover a wide range, beginning with ancient myths, and continuing with legal texts, historical texts, inscriptions, hymns, ritual texts and letters. In most cases there is a short introduction to the text and the margins are kept wide. Any likely references to the Old Testament, or to 197 illustrations that come at the end of the book, are found in this margin, and its width enables the reader to add his own notes as he uses it, thus enhancing the value (if not the appearance) of the book as the years go by.

Summary of such a book is impossible and mere listing of the contents is valueless. It may be worth our while, however, to notice some of the better known texts contained here, as well as those which are nearest to the Old Testament. From Egypt, for instance, we have *The Story of Two Brothers*, so closely similar to the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, and from Mesopotamia we have a myth concerning the Deluge, which is said to offer the closest and most striking parallel to biblical material that is to be found in Sumerian literature. In the legal section, the Code of Hammurabi, containing 282 laws, provides some interesting similarities with Scripture and there are cross references to the relevant texts. From Palestine we have the Moabite Stone, the Siloam Inscription and the Lachish Ostraca, valuable for the light they throw on philology as well as for the background they give us to the times of Jeremiah.

Perhaps one way to assess the value of this book is to compare it with the Old Testament Society's volume, *Documents From Old Testament Times*, edited by D. Winton Thomas, which set out in a somewhat more modest way to perform the same task. Some texts are to be found in both volumes, though Pritchard's book has many that are not to be found in the volume by Thomas. On the other hand the Old Testament Society's volume supplies some valuable notes explaining the text, is written on the whole in a more attractive style, and benefits from having the pictures in the main body of the book rather than having simply a reference in the text followed by a collection at the end. There can be no doubt that Pritchard's book offers more material, but it is questionable whether even now

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1 Nelson. 21s.
it has stepped down to the level of those for whom it is intended. Many of them will be content to continue using Thomas's book, though they would be well advised to use both and to allow one to supplement the other. Pritchard's book (which is our main concern here) cannot be faulted.

A. Gilmore

The Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, by Gordon Harland. (Oxford University Press. 298 pp. 42s.).

According to Niebuhr's distinguished colleague, Dr. J. C. Bennett, we have in Gordon Harland's book "an accurate and comprehensive exposition of Reinhold Niebuhr's social ethics." Divided into two parts, his study outlines first the theological structure of Niebuhr's thought and secondly his views on Politics, Economics, War and Race.

At the outset the book comes to grips with the heart of Niebuhr's approach, namely "heedless undiscriminating sacrificial love" as the law of life, though not a simple possibility within history. We are shown its relevance and its sources in the love of the cross and the nature of man, whose freedom ultimately demands such a limitless norm if his selfhood is to be fulfilled.

As Harland shows in his chapter on "Love and Justice," Niebuhr has sought to relate this norm to man's social and ethical problems by way of the concept of Justice—not a "fixed" but a "relational" and "dynamic" term. On account of his finite and sinful nature, man cannot create permanently valid structures of justice, but must seek to embody love within worldly structures realizing that any such achievement is only an approximation to the norm and is finally negated by it.

In Part II the chapter on "War and Peace" is disappointing particularly at section 5. That this appears to contain less than Niebuhr's contribution to the subject is partly due to the fact that his book, The Structure of Nations and Empires, appeared after this study was completed—a fact acknowledged in the Introduction.

Harland is an admiring and sympathetic expositor, allowing Niebuhr to speak for himself in some lengthy quotations, but he does not leave us unaware of the criticisms levelled against him. The views of Tillich, Barth, Williams and others are represented, though they are used mainly to clarify Niebuhr rather than his critics.

Harland is anxious to dispel the opinion that Niebuhr, obsessed with the doctrine of sin, has been unduly pessimistic in his analysis, and has failed to provide an "adequate positive direction." The same opinion has been expressed in Pacifist literature as an inadequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a power which redeems the life of man in society.
A whole chapter (5) is there devoted to "The Resources of Love for a Responsible Society," listing them as "Humility," "Tolerance," "Irony," "Justification by Grace," and the "Church." Those who hold the opinion which Harland seeks to dispel will probably remain unconvinced, and for several reasons.

In the first place, the author would not wish this chapter alone, but the whole book, to vindicate the view that Niebuhr has something positive to offer. Those who find him to be wholly pessimistic often fail to discern to the full the ambivalence of his thought. "Pessimism" and "optimism" are terms better replaced by "realism." Niebuhr does not deter us from the task of asserting the reign of Christ in society, especially since he has done so himself in saner and greater measure than most. But he does draw us back at every point from the heresy which identifies our view of the Kingdom with the Kingdom itself, from simple and irresponsible solutions to ambiguous problems and from the illusion that "heaven" can be built on earth. There are no limits save this one, and if this is "pessimism" then Niebuhr embraces it to the full and we do well to follow his example.

Again, this so-called "pessimism" is to be understood only within its historical setting. As Harland points out, the word to indicate the character of Niebuhr's work is "relevance" and Niebuhr had first to be relevant to a generation within which the liberal optimism of the Social Gospel was rife, with its superficial view of man's condition and its confidence that the Kingdom was round the corner.

Finally, there is a distinction to be made. Niebuhr would not and could not deny that the Holy Spirit works in power through individuals to accomplish great redemptive changes within society. But is this his main concern? This phenomenon surely belongs to the realm of personal ethics which may come close to heedless, sacrificial love. It does not, however, belong to the realm of social ethics where the Christian must, in the spirit of the Gospel, become a pragmatist as he seeks to establish justice in the midst of self-interested forces which can never be wholly eradicated, but which must be balanced against each other amidst the realities and use of power for the common good.

It is hoped that this book will be welcomed as an introduction rather than a summary of Niebuhr's work, and that it will be pondered by those who detect the inadequacy of our present-day evangelism. Mr. Harland has made available to us a key to the work of a man whose passionate concern ought to be ours, namely "so to understand and present the historic Christian faith that its insights and resources might bring illumination and healing to the frightening problems and perplexities of our age."

M. H. Taylor
Take and Read, by E. H. Robertson (S.C.M. Press, 8s. 6d., pp. 128).

The Bible has a very wonderful way of unexpectedly speaking with authority, with convincing and convicting power, and it often does so in times and circumstances in which it was assumed that it had nothing to say.

Mr. Robertson was assigned the task of finding out what has been happening to the Bible during these troubled war and post-war years. His discoveries in European and in many other countries make an inspiring record which will deepen the reverence and gratitude of Christian people for the Scriptures.

Most of the material contained in this valuable little book has been gathered during the author's travels in Europe, and is used to urge, explain, and encourage Bible Study by means of "Bible Weeks."

A full, detailed account is given of successful Bible Weeks that have already been held; clear guidance is given as to the best way of conducting them, and Mr. Robertson stands revealed as a wise, competent and experienced leader. No group of Bible students wishing to arrange and hold a "Bible Week" can afford to be without this helpful guide.

This method of Bible Study is very thorough and yet simple and adaptable and yields rich gains. The passage to be studied is selected and accepted by the group. It is then subjected to the most careful and searching examination to find out what it meant to those to whom it was proclaimed or for whom it was written. What was the Word of the Lord for them, then and there. Having answered that question the group then embark upon the vital task of relating that Word of God to themselves, to their own lives and to the situation in which they find themselves here and now.

This is not superficial, sentimental Bible reading: it is Bible study at depth. It is a method of studying Scripture which comes "full circle" and honestly seeks to know what is God's Word for us, Here and Now. Effective Bible Study demands the service not only of the humble reverent heart but also of the honest, informed mind. Here in the use of "Bible Weeks" is a practicable technique for engaging in it. How many Take and Read and Use it?

G. W. BYRT

An Enquiry into the obligation of Christians to use means for the conversion of the Heathen, by William Carey, with an Introduction by E. A. Payne (Carey Kingsgate Press, 10s. 6d. pp. 87).

This is a facsimile of the original edition issued in 1792. It is issued now in connection with the anniversary of Carey's birth (1761). Previous facsimiles were issued in 1892 and 1934. As a book
it is delightful to handle and to read. The 18th century printing and page set-up is a pleasing contrast to the printed page with which we are familiar. The subject matter is of absorbing interest and this not only to the historian but to the average reader. Carey’s style itself is a model and might well be imitated by all who have something they wish to communicate. His material is offered in plain straightforward language with a logic that is impeccable. To this day we marvel at the sheer ability of this young man whose educational advantages had almost all been created by himself.

He first examines our Lord’s Commission and shows that it is binding on all Christians at all times. He then gives an account of missions from Paul to the Moravians of his own day. Then he gives statistics of the state of the world—extent of each country, population and religion—then he deals with the practicability of something being done, answering the usual objections, and finishes with practical suggestions for doing it. A very comprehensive study in some eighty-odd pages.

But the thing that gets us every time we examine Carey is his modernity. His ecumenical outlook is only now being put into effect. Yet it was clear as day in his own mind. His conception of the native is ours. “Barbarous as these poor heathens are, they appear as capable of knowledge as we are,” and so on. Again he emphasizes pity and humanity, and the rightness of taking the benefits of our civilization to the needy. On the qualities required by the missionaries he is particularly clear-sighted. “They must live amongst the people and much in the same way as the people themselves live. They must have regard to and understanding of the life and customs of the people. They must have a clear idea of what they are there for, careful not to resent injuries, nor to think highly of themselves.” In fact if those who are training President Kennedy’s young men and women who are going out to help the backward countries should care to have a look at the Enquiry they would find a good deal of sound relevant advice that they could pass on.

It only remains here to say that this new facsimile edition is enhanced in value by the brilliant introduction by Dr. Ernest Payne, who as usual brings out new facts, this time about the printers and publishers of the original book.

A. Dakin

Ethics and the Gospel, by T. W. Manson (S.C.M. Press, 12s. 6d., pp. 109).

This book consists of six lectures given originally as an extramural course at the University of Manchester on the biblical foundations of Christian Ethics. Dr. Manson had begun the task of revising and enlarging his notes for publication when death halted
the work and denied us of the book which would have resulted. The Reverend Ronald Preston who completed the revision has put us all greatly in his debt by giving us a further opportunity of sitting at the feet of a beloved teacher.

As one would expect, the insights of this book delve into full biblical sources rather than into a string of isolated texts. For example in the Old Testament background Dr. Manson does not turn to the prophets as the mainspring of Hebrew ethics. He expounds the ethics of a kingdom. He examines the concept of Semitic monarchy and seeks the source of Hebrew ethics in a relationship between the King of Kings, the Lord’s anointed King and the people of the Kingdom. God commands only what He Himself exemplifies. In examining Judaism and the Law of Moses Dr. Manson uses the dictum of Simeon the Righteous who declared that “True and lasting civilization rests upon three foundations, the Law, Worship, and the imparting of Kindnesses.” This exposition penetrates to the motive springs of Hebrew ethics and leads him to re-examine the relationship of Jesus to the Law of Moses. “The tendency in the past has been to make the difference between Jesus and those who went before Him something like this: that the old Law insisted on the outward good whereas Jesus insists on the inward motive. This will not do.” The real differences are to be found within the deeper insights of our Lord’s Messianic ministry. For example, the great commandment to “Love the Lord thy God” and “Thy neighbour as thyself” are the quintessence of Jewish Law and not of Christian Ethics. “Love as I have loved you” is the characteristic hallmark of the Christian ethic. Again, he commands only what he exemplifies. In dealing with the earliest Christian community, Manson suggests that they thought of themselves neither as a synagogue nor a church, in our sense of the word. “The Kâhâl or ecclésia is not primarily a prayer meeting . . . it is the people of God in full exercise of all their communal activities.” To examine the ethics of the early church Manson finds a nearer analogy of its form in communities such as the Essenes. The Christian community was not just a worshipping society: like Judaism it was a full community in every sense, and its ethics are examined within this context. In the final chapter the procedure indicated is that of stripping off mistaken interpretations from the original teaching of Jesus, and applying the words not as laws but as power lines to the heart of every ethical situation.

The final words of the book are, “Christian Ethics is a work of Art.” So is teaching the Scriptures. In this Dr. Manson was a supreme artist and his creation, Ethics and the Gospel, is worth more than it costs to buy.

FRANK COOKE
BOOKS RECEIVED


Henri Eberhard, *Jacob*. 152 pp., 8s. 6d. Independent Press.

R. Ernest Bailey, *Peril at the Grange*. 166 pp., 7s. 6d. Independent Press.


W. H. Thorpe, *Biology, Psychology and Belief*. 60 pp., 4s. 6d. Cambridge University Press.


Aidan Pickering, *Your Life of Our Lord*. 133 pp. 7s. 6d. (limp), 6s. 6d. (hard). Darton, Longman and Todd.


Denis Baly, *Palestine and the Bible*. 82 pp. 2s. 6d. Lutterworth Press.


James Gray (ed.), *Towards Christian Union*. Twenty-five years of thought and action in the Churches of Christ, 1935-60. 103 pp. 12s. 6d. (art), 10s. (kromecote). Berean Press.


Robert Lloyd Roberts, *Fifty-five Questions and Answers about that Mysterious Creature called Man*. 65 pp. $1.50.


F. W. Bakewell, *Building a New Church*. 84 pp. 3s. 6d. Independent Press.

Kathleen Martin, *Son of the Mayflower*. 136 pp. 7s. 6d. Independent Press.