

Reviews

The New Testament in Modern English. J. B. Phillips. Fontana Paperback (75p) *J. B. Phillips' Commentaries, I & II Corinthians* by E. H. Robertson (40p) and Luke, John Drury (40p).

In 1972 J. B. Phillips produced a new translation of the New Testament, pruning many of his paraphrases and bringing some of the language up to date. Now we have a paperback edition, issued as the basis for a commentary series (rather like the Moffatt series), designed for "the average intelligent modern reader" (hereafter AIMR).

I confess to being unconvinced that there is an urgent need for a fresh series of commentaries—I have counted at least six current series aimed at the AIMR, not to mention the more academic commentaries. However, the first two volumes have been published. So—do they do the job?

I am sorry that I cannot commend Edwin Robertson's *1 & 2 Corinthians*. It comprises 4 pp. introduction plus 83 pp. on 1 Cor. and 50 pp. on 2 Cor., including the Phillips' translation. Comment inevitably is brief (e.g. 13 lines on 1 Cor. 12. 1-11; nothing on 1 Cor. 15. 20-28). Many difficult passages, expressions or issues are left unexplained. Robertson does not seem to have utilised some recent studies (e.g. Hurd, Schmithals, Wilckens, not to mention important articles like Hooker & Swete on 1 Cor. 11. 2-16 and 14. 20-25 respectively. Even Barrett's great commentary on 1 Cor. seems to have exercised little influence). Robertson adheres to the old critical division of 2 Corinthians—chapters 10-13 before 1-9. While I dissent from this along with a growing number (e.g. Munck, Barrett), it would have been better if Robertson had had the courage of his convictions and exegeted 10-13 before 1-9.

Nor can it be said that the modern application is particularly good. Thus, modern glossolalia is *not* mentioned in 1 Cor. 12-14, and there is no attempt to seek out a modern analogy to the meats issue of 1 Cor. 8-10.

John Drury's *Luke* is written in a lively style and vocabulary which carries the reader along. He is never dull and at times exciting.

There is however, a curious disjunction between Drury's approach and Phillips' preface. The latter states that the AIMR is not deeply interested in scholarly theories but in the historical reliability of what he reads. But (1) Drury's approach is that Luke used Matthew (a minority theory) and this *inevitably* colours a good deal of the commentary. (2) Drury stresses the creative role of Luke tremendously—Luke is apparently responsible for such parables as the Prodigal Son and Good Samaritan and has spun many narratives out of a saying or Old Testament allusion. Luke is for Drury *par excellence*

a story-teller. Symbolic significance is seen in many details (e.g. the raising of the Nain widow's son is a description of what it is to become a Christian). It is curious how some of the newer redaction exegesis comes very close to the older devotional, pietistic exegesis in seeing symbolic meanings and allusions here, there and everywhere. Thus a good deal of the gospel's "historical reliability" dissolves into Lukan creativity, and all this on the basis of a theory contained in a footnote, without any elaboration (p. 12).

I hope the AIMR is satisfied! The J. B. Phillips' commentary series seems to me to have got off to an odd start.

J. E. MORGAN-WYNNE.

Bedydd—Cred ac Arfer. D. Eirwyn Morgan. Abertawe (Swansea). Gwasg (Press). John Penry. 1973. 187 pp. Price £1.00.

Principal Eirwyn Morgan of the Baptist College, Bangor, North Wales, has placed his nation and his denomination deeply in his debt. In his *Bedydd—Cred ac Arfer*, Baptism—Credo and Practice, he has brought Wales, and all Baptists who can read Welsh, completely up-to-date on the current discussion regarding Christian baptism.

This volume, which is an expansion of the Pantyfedwen Lecture, delivered in Welsh in 1969, is notable because it represents the first exposure of all denominations in Wales to a scholarly survey of the most significant contributions made by various Christian scholars to the Church's understanding of the meaning of baptism.

Principal Morgan steers a clear course between magnifying the trivial and minimizing the important. He holds that the New Testament evidence is conclusive in favour of immersion, but because he is aware that the early Baptists practised affusion and that sprinkling is the acceptable mode in most Christian communions, he does not dogmatize about the mode. He suggests that both immersion and sprinkling may become acceptable to Christians in the years to come.

For Eirwyn Morgan the crucial issue is the meaning, or preferably the theology, of baptism. What is Christian baptism? What is the true relation between baptism and Calvary? Is the same gospel proclaimed through the "one baptism" and the "one loaf"? Is there a significant relation between baptism and the Supper?

It is incontestable that baptism in the witness of the New Testament Church was an act of incorporation into the "Body of Christ", the *soma Christou*, the Church. How, then, is this act of incorporation related to membership of the local congregation? If the latter is a local manifestation of the Church (e.g. the Church of God *in* Corinth), and if baptism be the one act of incorporation, what other conditions are necessary before "full membership" is granted? What is lacking in the act of incorporation which has to be supplied by the local congregation?

This issue is becoming increasingly urgent in view of our current practices. Are we not in grave danger of regarding the "local Church" in sociological and political terms, thus giving to "Church member-

ship" a non-theological meaning? Have not our "local Churches" become "religious clubs", and are we not in danger of undertaking the privilege of baptism and of the Lord's Supper "to our damnation", simply because we "do not discern the body"?

We are made to realize that the fundamental issue raised by Christian baptism is the nature of the Church. As Baptists we should have anticipated this emphasis. One of our Fathers urged upon Baptists "to weigh carefully the constitution of the Church" and our failure to do this may well represent the saddest feature in the life of the world-wide fellowship of Baptists.

To become aware of the nature of the Church is imperative, not only because of the nature of baptism, but also because of the presence and the rising importance of ecumenism in the life and witness of the Church. This movement takes seriously the oneness of the Church. In complete fidelity to the New Testament, it affirms that there is only one Body because there is only one Christ. The oneness of the Church is God's gift to the Church. Therefore, to discuss baptism in relation to the One Church is to give to both their true theological context.

This is only one of the issues raised. It indicates, however, the relevance of such theological enquiry to the witness and mission of the Church today. The bibliography supplied will be an invaluable treasure house for the student who wishes to continue the enquiry.

As the volume is written in Welsh, the reading public will be a limited one. This is to be greatly regretted because, in spite of the recent studies on baptism by Baptist scholars, there is nothing quite like this study available in any other language. It is a tribute to the integrity and to the loyalty of Eirwyn Morgan that he has chosen the cultural medium which he has mastered with elegance and with grace. In this he follows the continental scholars and theologians who make a similar choice. Consequently, his work, like theirs, is to be valued, not by the language used but by the quality of the study itself. In this respect, it takes its place among the treasures of Baptist studies.

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