

BOOKS AND THEIR WRITERS.

DR. G. K. A. BELL'S first publication since his appointment as Dean of Canterbury is *Documents on Christian Unity 1920-4* (Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d. net). The Movement for the Unity of the Christian Church falls into two periods. The first of these covers practically the ten years up to the Lambeth Conference of 1920 ; the second dates from the issue of the Lambeth Appeal to All Christian People in 1920. This volume of nearly 400 pages contains ninety important pronouncements mainly in response to the Appeal from nearly every section of the Christian World. It shows the large interest the subject has aroused during the last four years.

An interesting volume might be written on the preliminary movements of the previous ten years. In its due place would be given to the initiative taken by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America at its General Convention in 1910, when the World Conference on Faith and Order was first suggested. The actual World Conference is to be held in 1927. A number of Commissions of Enquiry have been at work collecting information. They have been very active and a vast mass of important matter has been already got together. In this connection we should like to express our sympathy with the Committee of the Conference on the death of their secretary, Mr. Robert H. Gardiner. A short tribute to his memory has just been issued by Bishop Brent, Chairman of the Continuation Committee of the World's Conference. Those who have been in touch with the Movement know how much it owes to the energy and industry of Mr. Gardiner. His wide experience and untiring activity will be sadly missed. As Bishop Brent says, "The profound impression made upon the Christian world by what he was and did baffles description. It is not too much to say that there is not a Church in Christendom, great or little, ancient or new, that does not know his name and feel kinship with his lofty soul. Better than that, his name carries with it a vision, a responsibility, a purpose, for it was not himself but Christ whom he exalted."

While this effort towards a better understanding was taking

place in America, another endeavour in quite a different part of the world aroused unusual interest. The controversy raised by the Kikuyu Conference is still fresh in all our memories. Indignation at this effort towards co-operation in the Mission Field was very strong in some Church circles. The present writer remembers an animated discussion he had with the Bishop of an African diocese while pacing up and down the Piazza at Venice in the Autumn of 1913. The Bishop was insistent that for the sake of the peace of the Church the C.M.S. must repudiate the whole scheme. Thanks to the wise action of the Bishop of Uganda and the sound judgment of the Archbishop of Canterbury the storm was allayed, and we have travelled a considerable distance towards a better understanding of the problem since those days. We have no doubt that this is in a considerable measure due to the Cheltenham Conference. The Conference took up the subject of Reunion, and at one of its early sessions after a calm and deliberate discussion issued a series of Findings pointing out the true relationship between Episcopal and non-Episcopal Churches. Many will recall the shock of surprise—and even of repudiation—with which these were received, especially we may add on the part of some of our Bishops. Yet two or three years later when the Lambeth Conference considered the subject, it found itself compelled by the logic of the position to adopt similar conclusions, with results that are now well known. The group of Evangelical clergy and laity who met for quiet thought on the meaning of the Church of Christ and its unity, had proved themselves true exponents of the teaching of the Church of England. They had simply done what our Church always does. They had sought to interpret the teaching of our Lord and the New Testament.

Dean Bell's collection of documents contains the material for a history of the reunion movement during the past four years. It shows the practical steps that have been taken in various parts of the world, mainly in response to the Lambeth Appeal. In England progress may seem at the moment to be slow. This volume shows the favourable reception given to the Appeal by the Free Churches. Documents from India, Australia and Canada show that greater progress has been made, and that there are greater possibilities of action in the mission field and in new countries. Considerable space is given to the Malines Conversations and the documents arising

out of them. It is clear from recent events that there is not much hope of further development on that side. The Eastern Church has responded favourably. The volume contains one misleading document issued by a section of our Church as a statement of doctrine to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Such misrepresentations are soon valued at their real worth. Dean Bell has had special opportunities for collecting this important series of documents as Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury. We have pleasure in joining in the general expressions of thanks to him for a volume of great usefulness and unusual importance. It ought to be in the hands of all who are taking any part in the reunion movement, and they ought to number the great majority of people in every Christian Communion.

The Revelation of St. John the Divine has probably been more variously interpreted than any other Book in the Bible. In consequence many give up attempting to understand it, and do not seek to find any spiritual help in it, while others lose themselves in a maze of bewildering interpretations by applying its symbolism to historical events and personages according to the theories of their favourite exponents. How can the average Christian best use the Book? The question has been answered by Dr. Limmer Sheppard in his *Devotional Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Two volumes, 3s. 6d. each. Religious Tract Society).

Students will always be interested in the problems suggested by the Apocalypse. They will discuss the nature of Apocalyptic literature and the relation of this Book to it. They will weigh the evidence as to its authorship and will accept or reject such views as those recently put forward by Archdeacon Charles. They will endeavour to interpret its symbolism, and will endeavour to find some connection between its visions and the events of history. On all these points there will continue to be widely differing opinions. Dr. Limmer Sheppard shows that there is a profitable use apart from these, and that there can be a devotional study independent of them. There have been three recognized Schools of interpreters—the Historical, the Præterist, and the Futurist, but Dr. Sheppard will not ally himself with any of these. He adopts the simple principle that the Book deals with spiritual principles and not

with historical events. Therefore "the message of the Book is not for any particular age, but for all time." His method is to give a brief but careful explanation of the text of each passage, then to point out one at least of the spiritual lessons that can be drawn from it, and as a rule no account is taken of differing interpretations so that the mind of the reader may not be confused. The most Scriptural and the most reasonable interpretation is selected, as is fitting in a devotional study. Some may not regard this as an adequate treatment of the Book, but when they have gone through the Commentary we have no doubt that they will be satisfied with the lessons they have been taught. Any Clergyman wishing to give his Congregation a course of addresses on the Apocalypse will find that in using this Commentary he is able to give a clear outline of the whole Book, an interesting account of its symbolism, and an abundance of spiritual lessons drawn from the visions. The author has followed in the steps of such wise Commentators as Dean Vaughan, Professor Milligan and Dr. Swete, and has shown "the deep and thrilling spiritual message" of the Apocalypse that has been so often ignored.

Many of us have joined the crowds that assemble round the speakers in Hyde Park, and have heard many strange doctrines. The Christian Evidence Society does valuable service to Christianity in providing competent speakers to present the Christian faith week by week to these gatherings. It is not easy to answer briefly some of the questions that are raised by inquirers. To give a short positive statement without qualification is to appear "cocksure." To attempt a less direct method is to run the risk of an accusation of "shuffling." The Rev. Clement F. Rogers, M.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology, King's College, has had a long experience of this work, and has developed the method of answering difficult questions to a nicety. He has published five series of the questions asked and the answers given in *Question Time in Hyde Park* (S.P.C.K., 6s. net). The claim made for the volume that it is "A complete manual of Christian Apologetics for the needs of the present day" has been questioned, but it will be found a most useful compendium of valuable information, and a handbook of special value to all who have to undertake such work in parks and public places. The five divisions of the series are (1) Free

Will and Determinism ; (2) The Teaching and Person of Christ ; (3) The Bible and the Creeds ; (4) Christianity and History ; (5) Christianity in History. Evangelical Churchmen would lay the emphasis differently in some of the answers, especially in the section on the Reformation, but in spite of this we recognize the usefulness of the greater part of the work. In addition to the actual answers a number of illustrations drawn from the writings of representative authors give further suggestions to supplement the necessarily brief statements in the replies. Reference is also made to standard books on the subjects treated. An important point in such a book is the index. Special care has evidently been taken to make this as complete as possible. It is headed with the quaint and useful motto, "Works which have indexes are fortunate for letters."

Archdeacon Charles' Warburton Lectures on *The Decalogue* (Messrs. T. & T. Clark, 7s. 6d.) have attracted widespread attention. He treats the subjects from the critical, the historical, and the practical standpoints. His chief aim is to emphasize the practical aspect and "to reinterpret the *Decalogue* on the spiritual and ethical lines already laid down in the New Testament, and to apply its lessons to the crying needs of our own day." Protestant Churchmen will be grateful to him for the definiteness of some of his practical comments in this connection. Thus on the second Commandment he traces the growth of Mariolatry, and points out that since the sixth century the cult of Mary has made gigantic strides, and that "from the twelfth century to the present time she is practically put on an equality with the Three Persons of the Godhead" in Roman homiletical and devotional books. He shows that "of the worship of Mary there is not a single trace in the New Testament." Again in regard to the increasing use of the Crucifix he says, "It is a false symbol ; for Christ is the Lord of life. In confirmation of this truth we cannot too often insist on the fact that the crucifix was unknown in the first five centuries of the Christian Church. . . . At best it is but a revived antiquarianism. No doubt its votaries think to possess themselves of the spirit of that twilight age of religion by imitating its customs and repeating its symbols. In these respects they do imitate the past, and imitate it successfully, but they do not inherit its truth and inspiration, unless their mental development is essentially that of the medieval

period." In his treatment of Communism, Syndicalism and other present-day developments he is equally clear and incisive. In its chief and practical portion the volume is of unusual interest and value.

Dr. Alex. M. F. Macinnes chose as the subject of his thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, *The Kingdom of God in the Apostolic Writings*. It is published by Messrs. James Clarke & Co. (6s. net), with a Foreword by Dr. John Douglas Adam. Its title scarcely does justice to the wide range of its scope. The Publisher's note says, "This volume is not a *thesis* for philosophers but a *lever* to those seeking to lift mankind to higher levels." This indicates its practical purpose. After an adequate examination of the sources and background of the Apostolic writings, written in the light of the best scholarship, and a full statement of the place of the Kingdom of Heaven in its various phases in the New Testament, he turns to the application of its teaching and its significance in the life of to-day. Here he covers problems of thought, belief and conduct, and on all of them he has some stimulating suggestions to offer. We do not say that we always agree with his point of view, but he earns our gratitude by the way in which he opens up lines of thought, and shows the possibilities lying before the united witness of the Christian Church to the great fundamental truths of our common faith.

G. F. I.

"The Church Reform League Chronicle" publishes in its September number a complete list of the Acts of the Church Assembly which have received the Royal Assent, and an interesting article by Viscount Wolmer entitled "Church Reform from Within," in which he describes the setting up of the Church Assembly and surveys the work accomplished, showing how far the Assembly has justified the hopes of its promoters and what its promise of future usefulness now appears to be. The editor of the "Chronicle," in commenting on the present position, expresses the opinion that "what is happening now is the direct outcome of many years of pioneer labour on the part of the Church Reform League, which for nearly thirty years has been, as it is to-day, the only Society solely concerned with the reform of the machinery and organization of the Church in England."