

Editorial

THE opportunity presented by the Greater London Crusade cannot be ignored. Furthermore, as Dr. Henry's article suggests, it may have an appreciable effect on theological thinking, for it should emphasize in a highly practical manner the contemporary return to a sense of the Authority of Scripture. "We believe," as the Bishop of Worcester writes in a later article, "that our life turns upon the choice between the Lord Jesus Christ . . . and any other Lord. We believe that our choice has been bound up with our knowledge of the written Word". But our belief has often been apologetic and indeterminate, with consequent detriment to our evangelism.

It is good at this time therefore, to be able also to welcome a book which should do much for Bible study. The publication of any new Commentary would be important, but the one-volume *New Bible Commentary*¹ published by the I.V.F. has significance in its own right. This does not lie so much in the considerable weight of scholarship represented among the fifty contributors, drawn from many denominations and several countries, nor in the fact that the first edition of thirty thousand copies was over-subscribed; it lies rather in what the editors set out to do, and in their achievement.

Bible commentaries of recent years have tended either to leave their readers in a trackless waste of criticism, with the spiritual heights seldom even seen, or to be merely devotional and homiletic, often with an unhealthy disregard of all critical findings. The *New Bible Commentary* seeks, in its own words, "to meet the widespread demand . . . for a new and up-to-date treatment of the text which would combine unqualified belief in its divine inspiration, essential historical trustworthiness and positive Christian usefulness with sound and careful scholarship". Scholarship, therefore, is made to serve the text; the general reader, in his search for the true meaning of Scripture, finds the text lit up rather than broken up, while being given a fair discussion of varying interpretations, and a sufficient guide to matters of origin and background.

By "deliberate choice" the compilers have not given any considerable space to source analysis. At times this leads them to pay insufficient attention to problems which will press on their readers; Genesis (E. F. Kevan) compares a little unfavourably in this respect with Dr. Alan Richardson's recent *Genesis I-XI*. On the other hand Isaiah (W. Fitch) gives a very adequate discussion of the authorship, holding the balances evenly while coming down on the side of unity. In the New Testament, questions of source are adequately dealt with (e.g. A. J. Macleod's St. John) while keeping the general plan of referring the reader to obtainable authorities for more elaborate discussion. References to authorities are given continually in the text of the commentary; but it might well be suggested that a serious defect is the absence of a bibliography, placed in sections or gathered in one

¹ *The New Bible Commentary*. Edited by the late Rev. Prof. F. Davidson, assisted by the Rev. A. M. Stibbs and the Rev. E. F. Kovan. Inter-Varsity Fellowship, pp. 1199, 35/-.

as an appendix. This would undoubtedly enhance the value of future editions.

A further departure from recent practice, and welcome, is the exclusion of numerous long articles in order to give more space to the textual commentary. Only ten general articles are printed, at the beginning of the book, together with eight short appendices in the course of it. Of these general articles, by far the most important is that on The Authority of Scripture by G. W. Bromiley. Dr. Bromiley first discusses the Biblical Witness—though it may be wondered whether the New Testament writers were conscious of as much as he suggests; then comes a section on the Reformed Doctrine, which is followed by a masterly analysis of modern trends—The Roman Catholic view, the Liberal Protestant view and that of the Theology of Crisis. This analysis is constructive, although the paragraph on most recent work and the widespread return to a more authoritative faith might have been expanded, and it is followed by a short section which should be closely studied: "A true doctrine of history and revelation in the Bible", Dr. Bromiley suggests, "will be formulated only when the problem is studied in the light of the similar problem of the Incarnation". These words are important. The view is not new, but it has not been given sufficient emphasis; it is hoped to arrange considerable discussion on the subject in later issues of THE CHURCHMAN, and contributions are invited.

It is inevitable in a book of this size and scope that there will be variations of standard, but it may be said without reserve that the *New Bible Commentary* achieves what it sets out to do, and more. The print and production is good, and the price reasonable. The balances are not always held evenly—too much space, for instance, is allotted to the Psalms, without compensating brilliance of treatment—but no student will turn to a difficult book or passage without receiving light on the text, and very often a guide to further study. Yet the most significant factor about the Commentary is its tone. The strident defensiveness which so often marred similar efforts in the past is gone. The editors and contributors believe that "Holy Scripture has a way of applying its own message to the hearts and consciences of men when it is properly understood"; their part is to help towards that understanding; Scripture will make its own authority plain.

The proof of any Commentary is in its effect on its users. As the *New Bible Commentary* finds its way on to the desks of Bible students, lay and ordained, it cannot fail to be productive of a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and of more effective Christian living. And that will be sufficient testimonial to its worth.

A short book which should also be widely read is the biography* of Fred Mitchell, Home Director of the China Inland Mission and a former Chairman of the Keswick Convention, who was killed in the Comet disaster in India last May. Fred Mitchell was not, of course, either a parson or an anglican, and much of his life was spent in comparative

* *Climbing on Track*. A biography of Fred Mitchell, by Phyllis Thompson. China Inland Mission, pp. 147, 6/-.

obscurity. But his loyalty to our Lord, and the high standard of consecration which he conceived to be Christ's due from every Christian, is a challenge and a spur. Miss Thompson tells the story delightfully, without hiding the inevitable element of human frailty and failing; she allows Mitchell to speak for himself, and the message of his life and preaching, so clear to those who knew and heard him, is given permanency by her book.

1954, with its Crusade on this side of the Atlantic, and its conferences on the other, cannot fail to be important and in some ways decisive. Such a book as *Climbing on Track* can help all concerned to that deeper devotion and prayerfulness without which, whatever the results on paper, this year will fail in its promise.

The Theology of Billy Graham

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR CARL F. H. HENRY, PH.D.

NOT everybody is a Theologian, but everybody has a Theology. And, simply because these are the words with which many a seminary professor reassures new ministerial students, they do not say enough about an evangelist whose labours under God have given him a conspicuous place in contemporary Christian effort. Billy Graham has a theology—doubtless not fully systematized and carefully elaborated in details as the professional theologian would prefer it, but something considerably more than a vague and formless phantom whose features seem never to achieve definiteness.

One might begin by saying that Graham's theology, in its main thrust, is that of Moody and Sankey, or of R. A. Torrey, and doubtless this is a fact, although it would not be the happiest of beginnings. There is, beyond doubt, a common core of doctrinal conviction which may be traced through almost all the prominent American evangelists, whether one thinks of past generation figures like Moody, Torrey and Billy Sunday, or contemporaries like Charles E. Fuller of world-wide Revival Hour fame. They are evangelicals, and as such have stood consciously over against the optimistic liberal tradition in theology. Many of them, indeed, would be quite ready to confess that evangelism is ideally the task of the local Church, but that the loss of the evangel or good news by multitudes of pulpits or its retention simply in principle without an urgent outreach to the lost, had created the necessity of mass evangelism in our era.

But more must be said than that. Graham's convictions, as they obviously do, place him solidly in the tradition of evangelical theology. The burden of the true evangelist is the apostolic message: Christ crucified for doomed sinners and risen. And it is to the biblical theology, frankly and unashamedly, that Graham would trace his first lines, and measure the content of his preaching by the prophetic and apostolic message as an absolute norm.