

so that it is not only concerned with what the Holy Spirit has willed to do in the past, but also with what he wills to do now and in the future. Already, obedience to the will of God has brought its first fruits into the life of the church, for in the midst of tension "many problems of the conference hall that seemed almost insoluble when we faced each other from outside, with an obligation to defend the separate denominational emphasis, have taken on a very different appearance when we find ourselves handling them as practical issues within the fellowship of one church".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

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## Fragmentary Truths

*Some New Books on Modern Movements*

BY THE REV. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT, M.A.

FROM early days the Christian Church has had to declare its attitude towards deviationists. St. Paul, St. John, and St. Peter, all speak in the strongest terms of those who held their own erroneous versions of the Christian message. While they were ready to be tolerant over quite a wide area, they believed that there were certain boundaries which could not be crossed without ceasing to be members of the true Church. The problem of heresy and schism continued through the centuries, and the creeds and formularies are very largely to be read in the light of answers to erroneous expressions of the Christian Faith. Gradually it was agreed that this or that was the crystallization of the articles of the Faith, and a fair summary of the Biblical revelation. Those who held different opinions must go on their own way; they were not members of the Church of Jesus Christ. Obviously this principle could be, and was, overdone. Less important things became recognized as *de fide*, and indeed a whole host of unscriptural dogmas were elevated to credal status. Hence our Reformers went back to the Three Creeds as basic. They "ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture" (Article VIII).

The assumption that underlies the New Testament and Christian thought of later ages is that the substance of the Christian Faith has come by revelation from God, and may be found in the pages of the Bible. Deviationists have taken two lines. Some have agreed with the premise, but have argued that orthodox Christians have been mistaken in the propositions that they have derived from the Bible. They may even add a further "inspired" book of their own, by which the Bible is to be interpreted. Others have started with the basis of experience, and have allowed just so much authority to the Bible, or to sections of the Bible, as will illustrate and support their experience.

Examples of these different attitudes will be found in Dr. Horton Davies's book, *Christian Deviations*, where he discusses some of the

heresies that are living issues to-day. He does not suggest the grouping mentioned above, but one can easily rearrange his list, and also add in brackets some further examples that he does not mention. In the first group are those that accept the Bible as fully inspired, but draw unorthodox conclusions from it. These include Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventism, British Israelitism (and Christadelphians). In this first group also are those who add a book of their own as a key to the understanding of the Scriptures. These include Christian Science, the Mormons or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (and also, to all intents and purposes, the Swedenborgians, or The New Church). In the group which start with experience there are Theosophy, Spiritism, Moral Re-Armament or the Oxford Group, Astrology, Open-air Religion (and Anthroposophy).

A glance at this array of names will show that they are of differing calibre, and some deviate far more from orthodox Christianity than do others. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians reject the Trinity and the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, while Seventh Day Adventism and British Israelitism firmly maintain these two points. In fact, I myself would never group B.I. with the others; it would be fairer to recognize it as a particular interpretation of prophecy within the orthodox Church of Christ. Christian Science, like Theosophy, distinguishes Jesus from the Christ, a heresy which is, strangely enough, adopted by Dr. John Knox in his recent book, *Criticism and Faith*. Its teaching also negates the orthodox Christian belief in the nature of sin and the fact of Christ's Atonement, which is another striking characteristic of most of these heresies. Swedenborg taught a doctrine of the Trinity that, in the form of Sabellianism, was early rejected by the Church. Theosophy and Anthroposophy are modern perpetuations of Gnosticism, and regard Christianity as one out of many world religions that can make their contributions to a truth greater than any single one of them. Spiritism, or Spiritualism, so far as it is a religion, is a hotch-potch of "revelations", most of which again deny the deity of Christ and His atoning death. Moral Re-Armament can be extremely good, but it can also have the instability that comes from stressing the subjective at the expense of the objective. The same might be said of the best Open-air Religion, as exemplified by the nature mystics. Astrology can hardly be ranked as a religion, though in not so very distant times it has been accepted by members of the Christian Church; someone, who professed to know, told me that Dean Farrar held it.

In all honesty one is bound to consider whether Freemasonry ought not to be included among the deviations. That is certainly the opinion of Walton Hannah and H. S. Box, whose books have already been reviewed in this journal. Now Walton Hannah has written a further book, *Christian by Degrees; Masonic religion revealed in the light of faith*. It is almost as devastating as his previous book, even though it concentrates more particularly on those higher degrees, which are only open to professed Christians, after they have worked through the earlier degrees that are open to all who admit the existence of God. These earlier degrees include the ritual of the Royal Arch, with the "discovery" of the great Name of God as Jah Bul On, the

sort of discovery, apparently, that Theosophists and their predecessors made long ago. All the degrees may, of course, be interpreted as play acting, in spite of the solemn religious atmosphere which surrounds them, but Mr. Hannah, from the standpoint of the New Testament, cannot see how Masonry can be harmonized with loyalty to Christ. It is useless to shut our eyes to his criticisms, even though he was offered a "gift" of £1,000 to stop the publication of his first book!

Masons say that an outsider cannot fairly understand the meaning of Masonry, and there must be some truth in this. The same is true of all the deviationist movements. It is extremely difficult to see things from their point of view. Yet who can investigate them impartially? Geoffrey Williamson has done his best with Moral Re-Armament in his book, *Inside Buchmanism*. This is the fascinating story of how he, as a journalist, set out to learn the facts about M.R.A., with all the sympathy and help that he could obtain from the Buchmanites themselves. He was invited to Caux, and writes in detail of his experiences there. The leaders knew his plans, and professed to be helping him towards the publication of a major article in one of the weeklies. At the last minute they "scooped" him with a similar article in a rival weekly a few days before his was due to appear. One is left wondering about the Absolute Honesty of the affair; but Mr. Williamson does not appear to bear them any malice, and his account reads as a full and fair assessment of a movement that is a force to be reckoned with.

Another assessment of a movement is Royston Pike's *Jehovah's Witnesses*. It is not so intimate as the book on M.R.A., but the author has taken the trouble to have first-hand contacts with those of whom he writes. He has discovered what many writers have not discovered, though it is perfectly true, that Jehovah's Witnesses to-day have moved on from Pastor Russell and even from Rutherford. In dealing with them one must know their latest books. Mr. Pike writes simply from the factual point of view, but he has missed one important point on page 37, where he should have made it clear that J.Ws do not believe that the body of Jesus was raised from the dead. But the book is a good one for all who have to deal seriously with J.Ws.

To return to the book with which we began, *Christian Deviations*; it is clear that Dr. Horton Davies lacks the familiarity with some of his heresies that the two last mentioned books have. One suspects that for Theosophy, for example, he has read few Theosophical writings, but has depended on what others have written. He has completely misunderstood the doctrines of the seven bodies of man, and is not at all clear about the significance of reincarnation and karma. In writing of the Mormons he makes the astonishing statement that Mormons deny the pre-existence of Jesus before His Incarnation. On the contrary they believe in the pre-existence of all souls. Some day someone will have to tackle Astrology more seriously than it has been tackled hitherto. It is little use producing proofs that these things cannot be so; in the past similar proofs have been used to demonstrate the impossibility of things that experience has shown to be facts. When I myself went into the subject, I learnt how to cast a horoscope (though I have forgotten it now), and was convinced that underneath

much that was fanciful, there was a residue of hard fact for which I could not see any explanation. But in spite of these criticisms, this is a useful book.

We are continually meeting these movements, and we are bound to have standards of assessment. If our standard is the Bible, it must be the Bible as a whole. If our standard is experience, it is extremely difficult to say why our experience is right and the other man's wrong. Truth then becomes subjective, though Christians have always believed it to be objective. We cannot deny experience; but we must test the ultimate validity of our experience by the objectivity of the revealed Word of God.

*Books reviewed in the above article :*

CHRISTIAN DEVIATIONS. By Horton Davies. *S.C.M. Press.* pp. 126. 7/6.

CHRISTIAN BY DEGREES. By Walton Hannah. *Augustine Press.* pp. 222. 12/6.

INSIDE BUCHMANISM. By Geoffrey Williamson. *Watts.* pp. 227. 12/6.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. By Royston Pike. *Watts.* pp. 140. 10/6.

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## Nicholas Ridley

BY THE REV. G. C. B. DAVIES, M.A., D.D.

"LATIMER leaneth to Cranmer, Cranmer to Ridley, and Ridley to the singularity of his own wit." This taunting remark of Bishop Brookes of Gloucester to Ridley at Oxford, in October, 1555, referred not to the work of the Reformation in general, but to the fact that on the error of Transubstantiation, Ridley, who had been privately convinced in the course of his own reading, had brought over Cranmer to his point of view. Cranmer, in his turn, in 1547, had drawn Latimer into agreement with his brethren. The man who had such influence over Cranmer as to convince him of doctrinal error, deserves the attention and gratitude of all lovers of Protestant truth.

Second son of a father bearing the same name, Nicholas Ridley was born in Northumberland, probably in 1502 or 1503. His boyhood was full of the sound of border warfare, the battle of Flodden being fought when he was about ten years old. Educated at Newcastle School, he went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, about 1518, taking his degree in 1522, and being made a Fellow of his college two years later. About 1527, he was sent to read at the Sorbonne and at Louvain, and years later he recalled the "Sorbonical Clamours", judging them moderate in comparison with the storm that raged around his own head at the Oxford Schools. By 1534 he was Senior Proctor, and chaplain to the University, and in 1540 he was chosen as Master of Pembroke. He had already shown his sympathy with the cause of reform when, in 1534, with almost the entire Senate of the University, he had signed the decree against the Papal supremacy. By 1539 he had come to the notice of Cranmer, who made him one of his chaplains,