

Book Reviews

The Study of Missions in Theological Education: by Olav Guttorm Myklebust. Vol. I (to 1910). Egede Instituttet, Oslo, 1955.

There are books which are reviewed in order to encourage people to buy them. There are others which deserve a review just because most people will not be able to buy them. The present volume belongs to the latter category. It is a specimen of highly specialized research work, and as such it is not likely to arouse the interest of a wider public. Moreover, in an age when the very term 'missions' is suspect, it may seem to be an anachronism to write what Dr. Myklebust defines as 'an historical inquiry into the place of world evangelization in Western Protestant ministerial training'. Yet there are at least two reasons why this unique publication, which is indeed a 'pioneer venture' (p. 16) in its field, should be known in India and find a place in as many of our theological libraries as possible.

First, while offering an historical survey of academic missionary education in the West, it permits penetrating and often surprising insights into the motives and the background of the Western missionary enterprise in general. Thus it is a valuable companion to Professor K. S. Latourette's voluminous study of the history of the expansion of Christianity. While the latter gives a full account of the actual results or failures of the world-wide missionary endeavour of the Christian Church in history, Dr. Myklebust traces, as it were, the theological grass-roots of that endeavour, and the findings are most illuminating. Even when the churches in Asia and Africa are rapidly coming into their own, they cannot afford to ignore the foundations which were laid by the Western missions, and it should be a vital concern of the churches in India, too, to understand that part of their past.

Secondly, a large part of the present volume of 459 pages is devoted to the Chair of Missions established at Edinburgh for Alexander Duff and largely inspired by him. It was after his return from India in 1867 that Duff became 'the first professor of missions in all Christendom', and thus the young church of India has made a most significant indirect contribution to the development of what Duff himself called 'Evangelistic Theology'. The terminology in itself reflects Duff's experiences in India, for he felt that the term 'missions' might be 'too homely and familiar' and therefore he preferred the new term 'evangelistic' which he rightly considered to be both more comprehensive and

more Biblical (pp. 189-90). It was in India that Duff learned that great lasting truth: 'When the Church ceases to be evangelistic, it must cease to be evangelical, and when it ceases to be evangelical, it must cease to exist as a true Church of God' (p. 171). While Duff's experiment at Edinburgh had considerable influence on similar efforts in other countries, it remained a temporary experiment only, not least because of the 'general apathy and unconcern on the whole subject' in the churches of which Duff had often to complain (p. 199). This indifference as well as certain limitations in Duff's own approach offer much food for thought in view of the evangelistic task of the ecumenical church of our day.

There is no room here to give even a vague idea of the vast amount of historical material which has been collected and critically analysed by Dr. Myklebust. The present volume leads up to the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, 1910, and the reader who has followed the story so far will look forward not only to the second volume but also to the systematic presentation of 'missiology' which Dr. Myklebust, who is Director of the Egede Institute of Missions at Oslo, Norway, plans to write later and for which he should be qualified like few others.

Madras

H. W. GENSICHEN

The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches: by Edward Duff. Longmans. 25s.
(Obtainable from Orient Longmans (Private) Ltd., Post Box 2146, Calcutta.)

It is surely a remarkable thing that the first attempt to give a survey of the thought of the ecumenical movement on social and international questions should come from the pen of a Jesuit, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, which consistently refuses to associate itself with the movement; and yet what an excellent piece of work he has done. Is it that that the 'outsider' sees more of the game! But it does not read like the work of an outsider. Father Duff has mastered the complex history and structure of the World Council of Churches and a vast mass of documentary material both printed and mimeographed and he skilfully pinpoints some of the significant personalities.

It is only eight years since the World Council was born and it may be that its supporters think that it is too soon to survey the already considerable volume of work done in the realm of social criticism or can it be that in the constituency of the World Council too few have realized the significance of this aspect of the Ecumenical Movement? Be that as it may be, the Jesuit has stepped in and done an altogether admirable work. Indeed it is doubtful whether it could be better done and it is unlikely

that this book will be replaced by anything better for many years to come.

The writer traces with great sympathy the forces in the Christian world which led to the formation of the World Council—the alliance of many denominations for the evangelization of the world in what used to be called ‘the mission field’ and which in the form of ‘the younger churches’ is increasingly making itself felt, the World Student Christian Federation which had begun to bring thinkers of many different traditions together in study of Faith and Order, and last but not least the varying groups within the churches which had been influenced by ‘the Social Gospel’. This last tendency with its emphasis on ‘Life and Work’ found its expression in the Stockholm Conference in 1925. The background was the short period of optimism and liberalism which preceded the great depression and the rise of fascism and there was still a belief that divided Christians could unite in social policy so long as theology was excluded. But the dark period that followed led in Germany to the rediscovery of Reformation theology and the increasing influence of Karl Barth, and it became clear that Life and Work must be closely linked with Faith and Order and slowly with a good deal of travail the World Council was born.

It is obvious that such a unique organization is faced with real difficulties in propounding a social doctrine. It has brought together churches with widely differing cultural and theological traditions, many different political pressures are brought to bear upon its members and as a reviewer of this book (Philip Mairet in ‘Theology’) has pointed out its ‘a-cephalic ecclesiology’ makes it difficult for the Council to make authoritative pronouncements. Whatever it may say will clearly differ in weight and content from the papal encyclicals and any attempt at a synthesis of its Social Thought may prove impossible.

But, in fact, Father Duff’s attempt at a synoptic account of the Council’s work in this field gives it a significance and a coherence which may surprise some who have tried to follow its findings in conference and study group, the proceedings of which are massive in quantity and somewhat bewildering in variety and complexity. From this voluminous material Father Duff has succeeded in extracting the essence. This must have involved considerable labour as the bibliography and excellent footnotes suggest but it also shows most excellent and sensitive discrimination. Out of conflicting tendencies which have recurred through innumerable ecumenical debates a pattern seems to emerge which the world outside the churches might well take seriously.

There is a consensus of judgement about the principle of a Christian society even when the reasons for coming to this judgement are greatly confused and varying in character.

The author refers more than once to Dr. Oldham’s formulation of ‘our deepest differences’ in terms of the ‘ethic of

inspiration' and the 'ethic of ends' and to the late Archbishop Temple's attempt to find 'middle axioms' to bridge the gulf between the pure principles of the Christian ethic and the actual historic situation in which we find ourselves and in which we are called to take action.

A deep cleavage is that between the 'Catholic' and the 'Protestant' approach to the problems of society. This is most excellently handled in an appendix and the great virtue of this is that it does not use the word Catholic as identical with papal or Roman and carefully keeps the word in inverted commas! Similarly 'Protestant' might better be described as 'evangelical'. The two approaches so fairly summarized in this appendix differ about the nature of man and the redeemed community. Both agree that man is fallen but differ as to what this implies.

The 'Catholic' realizes that man needs grace to fulfil his true end but can nonetheless have some sense of his true end by the exercise of reason, for the mind of God has been expressed not only in revelation but in the very structure of life so that man is a social being with a hierarchy of values and purposes. He must obey just laws in a community which is ordained by God and he must be involved in the responsibilities of building and maintaining the 'temporal City'. Thus, the State has positive purposes as well as the negative task of checking anarchy or restraining sinful man. Natural society has its basic structure the rules of which can be discovered by reason, supplemented and clarified by God's revelation but not contradicted by it. It is clear that on this view the individual is located in the community. This community—mankind—is redeemed by Christ and within the new spiritual community—the Church—the individual hears God's message and makes contact with God's grace. The 'Protestant' questions this approach as a construction of human vanity. Reason like the rest of man is corrupt and such an approach of natural law is too static and its view of human nature too optimistic. Now the focus is on the individual who remains a sinner though forgiven by God and restored to sonship. Justified by faith man carries on a dialogue with God in the secret recesses of the heart without an intermediary and receives the testimony of the Spirit as the result of prayerfully consulting God's Word. There is a community of the saved whose names are known only to God, a fellowship of believers, but each individual makes his own contact with God and the Church is constituted when men meet to hear the Word of God and to be reminded of His saving Act in the sacraments. The result is a spiritual ethic which is a quality of living rather than a code of conduct. This world is sinful and one lives 'between the times' of God's redemption and the End. This scheme works out differently in Lutheranism and Calvinism but in either case, especially in the Lutheran, leads to a dualism between the worldly community and the Kingdom. Church and State are not two aspects of man's existence as child of God but

two opposing principles and the result is either an attempt at a Christocracy as in Calvin or an acceptance of the world as a place in which to suffer and to serve.

Here in this differing background of principle lies the obstacle to social and political judgement, but a further difficulty is to be found in sharply contrasting political situations as may be seen in the debate between Hromadka, living in a Communist country, and Dulles of America at the Amsterdam Assembly,

Despite these difficulties certain positive achievements are listed. The Council has asserted the essential dignity of man and whenever any person is ill-treated or denied his human rights God is mocked.

It has insisted, too, that man cannot live on his own: he is his brother's keeper with responsibilities that arise from God's love for all men. He cannot wash his hands of the world or be unconcerned about injustice. Service is the test of his love of God. Civic and international responsibilities are part of the obligation of service and involve intelligent participation in and criticism of national political systems and international organizations.

The Council by its never-ceasing work of charity in inter-church aid and care of refugees reminds the world agencies of a motivation and of programmes of assistance which they often ignore. Without charity and voluntary activity the future pattern of the world will be intolerably harsh and impersonal.

The Council has proclaimed the spiritual solidarity of mankind and challenged the claims of absolute sovereignty and the existence of iron curtains, and here are implications of vast consequence in a world faced with such dreadful possibilities. Systems of racial segregation, the division of the world into privileged and underprivileged, stand condemned.

The most fruitful formulation has been that of the 'Responsible Society' which tries to find a 'third way' between the extremes of Capitalism and Communism, to harmonize the demand for social security without the sacrifice of political liberty.

None can read this book without feeling that the work of the Council must go on. At a time when it is so often suggested that 'ethical values have no place in the field of social dynamics and power politics',¹ Christians must not retire from the battle but continue, strengthened by the Christian Hope, to relate their Faith to the needs of the world. This will involve hard work, hard thinking and dependence upon the grace of God. It will need far more use of the laity, for, as Father Duff points out, ecclesiastics are not always happiest in the realm of politics and economics and Christian laymen with technical knowledge are

¹ A quotation from Prof. Alfred Cobban quoted by Father Duff.

essential in ecumenical discussions, if they are to be relevant and informed. The work of course will go on and for those involved in it throughout the world this book will provide an invaluable source of reference as well as a real source of inspiration.

Bangalore

LEONARD M. SCHIFF

A Creed Before the Creeds : by H. A. Blair. Longmans, 1955, 173 pages. 16s.
(Obtainable from Orient Longmans (Private) Ltd., Post Box 2146, Calcutta.)

The main attempt of this book is to show that the creeds of the Church have a significant prehistory behind them. These take their start right from the New Testament. In the words of the author, the purpose of the book is 'to show that there was in fact such a creed in the early Church and it survived until well into the second century. Its pattern is seen in the New Testament and the early writings: it is both positive and relevant. It is centred on Christ . . .' (page 5 of the Preface).

To be more precise the clearest formulation of such an original creed, according to the author, is to be found in 1 Timothy 3:16 which is as follows (page 5):

We confess that
Great is the mystery of godliness, which was
Manifested in flesh,
Justified in spirit,
Seen of angels,
Proclaimed among nations,
Believed on in creation,
Received up in glory.

The first twelve chapters covering nearly two-thirds of the book are devoted to an exposition of the main elements in this creedal formulation. In the final part of the book, the author stresses the impact of such a creed on some of the writers of the earliest centuries of the Christian era.

A word may be said with regard to the method of approach adopted by the author. While it cannot be denied that the New Testament writings do and must contain the seeds for the growth of later creeds, it may be questioned why just 1 Timothy 3:16 is chosen as a typical instance for such an original creed. It is more natural to conclude from a survey of New Testament writings as a whole that the kerygma is the centre around which the creed even as early as New Testament times would revolve. If that is true the author's claim to legalize the formulation of the creed to just one instance might be questioned. Furthermore, the use of the word 'Creed' also needs clarification. The word 'Creed' applied to the traditional creeds of the early Church has a certain connotation which is primarily determined