

Book Reviews

Christian Believing: A Report by the Doctrinal Commission of the Church of England. London, SPCK, 1976. Pp. xii+156. Price £ 2.50.

The Doctrinal Commission of the Church of England has been commissioned to study 'The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds.' The book under review is the outcome of this study. It consists of two parts: the Joint Report offered by the Commission; Individual Essays by eight of its eighteen members. This structure is by itself an indication that the official report had to limit itself to stating what could be the object of a broad consensus, leaving it to each member to further explain his own position. This impression is corroborated by the great variety of opinions expressed in the individual essays.

The study addresses itself to the many intricate problems posed in recent years to Christian believing. Not all these problems are new, but the new context in which they are to be viewed calls at least for re-examination. The central issue is that of the validity today of the traditional expressions of the faith, whether derived from the Bible or from the Creeds. This central issue raises the problems of tradition, hermeneutics, of language, of unity and pluriformity, not to mention them all. The general context of the study is the relativism which modern historical and linguistic studies have brought to our understanding of the past, Bible and Creeds not excluded. The issue is therefore one of tradition versus search, of adaptation of the message to the world and vice versa.

The approach of the report to all these questions is open; its answers are balanced but, for the reason stated above, descriptive rather than directive. A plea is made for pluriformity of faith-expression, in keeping with the pluriformity in unity already observed in the New Testament itself and further exemplified by the ancient Creeds. The individual essays differ vastly in orientation, from the frankly conservative to the fairly liberal. The consensus expressed in the report testifies all the better to a common sense of Christian faith.

The book is of value, not only for the Anglican Communion but also for other Churches in the present ecumenical context. For the questions raised are posed to all the Churches in search of the doctrinal consensus which is a necessary condition for Church unity.

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Psychology and Christianity: The View Both Ways: by Malcolm A. Jeeves. IVP, 1977. Pp. 184. N. p.

Dr Malcolm A. Jeeves is a professor of psychology at St Andrew's University. He has been interested in the field of thinking and experimental neuropsychology. His previous book, *The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith*, dealt with subjects such as determinism, cosmology, evolution and other ideas of modern science, in terms of their impact on Christian faith. In this book also the author is trying to examine and assess the significance of psychological theories for religious behaviour, with the sole purpose of deepening the faith of Christian students. Throughout the book the author labours to make his point and to justify the contention that religion is not something irrational or unscientific, but meaningful and complementary to psychology in understanding man and his behaviour.

Even though the author assumes that there is no need for conflict between psychology and religion, he approaches the subject with a certain sense of prejudice. It becomes quite evident from the very beginning that the author is trying to inject his conservative faith into the subject matter of this book. At times the author becomes dogmatic and shows no sign of flexibility in his approach to the problems of young students of the twentieth century. It seems that the book as a whole is nothing but an attempt to prove that Christianity has all the answers to the questions put forward by psychology. He gives prescribed answers rather than allowing the students to struggle through and to discover their own answers. He also prescribes a particular method or approach in dealing with and evaluating the knowledge and findings of psychology about Christian faith.

In his introduction, the author tries to impress upon his readers that there is much confusion in the field of psychology on many major issues. He warns that unless Christians become aware of this confusion and the differences of opinion among the psychologists, they will not be able to defend themselves against the attacks on their faith. As the author himself is a psychologist and a firm believer in Christian faith, he is aware that conflicts between psychology and religion are based on superficial understanding of both. He argues that since religion and psychology have their own respective languages, much conflict could be avoided if this fact is taken into consideration. According to the author conflict between religion and psychology arises when one has little knowledge of psychology or attempts to apply it inappropriately to interpret the Scriptures. He makes the dogmatic statement: 'It is not that Scripture is in error, but rather our interpretation of it' (p. 19).

In chapter two, the author deals with the scope, methods and the models of psychology. While discussing the nature and work of psychologists, he tries to impress upon the readers that much confusion exists among the psychologists; however, he gracefully ignores a similar confusion in the field of religion. After this he presents brief descriptions of Watson's behaviourism and Freud's psychoanalysis, only

to discredit them. Although the author concedes some contributions of these two schools, he rejects their adequacy for providing a balanced critique of the Christian faith.

In chapter three, the author evaluates some of the contemporary psychological theories which seem to come into conflict with religious approaches to human behaviour. The main attempt is to demolish Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and to declare it as outdated in academic circles. Of course, this is done in connivance with those psychologists who are opposed to Freud. It is quite evident that the author is hostile to Freud. His criticism that Erikson is popularizing psychoanalysis for 'the man in the street' is most unjust. He simply neglects to appreciate the contributions of Freud to an understanding of religion. I think that it would be most unscientific to ignore the fact that Freud's ideas on religion have provoked many Christians to examine carefully the nature and dynamics of religious behaviour. Of course, it would be wrong to depend only on Freud to understand religious behaviour.

It may be that a certain section of academic psychology has vehemently attacked Freud's approach to religion, but to say that a large section has done so is not only wrong but also a clear indication of the author's prejudice against Freud. After attempting to demolish Freud's theory of psychoanalysis the author proceeds to attack other models: (1) Information processing models of man, (2) Ethnological models of man, (3) Skinner and behaviourism. The author feels that the architects of these models have gone beyond the limits of their scope as psychologists. After discussing these models, somewhat superficially, he rejects the adequacy of any one of them for understanding religious behaviour.

In chapter four, the author considers the 'Christian view of man' and concludes that it is timeless. He concedes the fact that it is not scientific, but feels that it has made sense to people in all ages about God's revelation. The author is aware of the contradictions within the Bible, but feels that a holistic view is possible if the Bible is seen from different perspectives. The author tries to construct, somewhat unsuccessfully, a single picture of man based on the Bible. He views the Christian idea of man from three perspectives: Firstly, what is the calling of man? Secondly, what is the nature of man? And finally, what is man's destiny after death? Here the author becomes a preacher and starts sermonizing to the readers. According to him man is made to transcend his nature so that he may relate to God and to his fellowman; and if man keeps the laws of God, as recorded in the Scriptures, he will become happy. The troubles of the world are diagnosed as man's disobedience to God's laws. The prognosis is that if man accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord he will regain his destiny. He talks about hope and a new body after death, but without adequate discussion.

In chapter five, the author shows that since the psychological models of the nature of man go on changing, they should not be used in under-

standing or interpreting the Christian models of man. Moreover, the Christian models are not only more stable but also more applicable to all ages. He writes: 'As we have seen earlier, the picture of man that derives from Scripture is not one that is confined to any particular age, but embodies truths about man which are enduring and which apply in scientific and in pre-scientific eras alike' (p. 80). He criticizes the psychological models of man on the basis that most psychologists regard man as nothing more than a developed animal or an extremely complex machine. This indeed is an over-simplification.

In chapter six, the author recognizes the importance of studying animal behaviour for understanding human behaviour, but warns that such studies cannot be generalized and should not be applied in understanding the complexity of human behaviour. According to the author man should not be equated with animals because the capacity to respond to God is found only in man and not in animals. He discusses Skinner's book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* with the aid of reviewers of the book, and comes to the conclusion that Skinner's explanation of how man comes to know God is a mechanistic explanation, which does not do full justice to the religious experience of man. The author then discusses another book *Behaviour Control* by Dr Peery London, to demonstrate the extent to which behaviour technology is being used to manipulate human beings, especially in the area of psychotherapy. The author raises ethical questions involved in the manipulation of human behaviour, and warns of the dangers if human behaviour is manipulated without the consent of the person. At the end of the chapter, the author gives evidence of confusion and muddled thinking. On the one hand, the author seems to recognize that manipulation can bring about desired results in human behaviour, but on the other hand, he says that outward behavioural changes are not what God seems to want. What he is trying to say here is that the changes which are brought about by God cannot be duplicated by drugs or any other technique. The problem which he has discussed here is indeed a complex one, and cannot be resolved by merely making religious statements.

In chapter seven, the author discusses the perennial question of the freedom of man, which has become acute in the light of the tremendous growth of the behavioural sciences. After discussing the implications of psychosurgery and psychoactive drugs for human behaviour, the author takes up the issue of finding a solution to the problem of freedom. The author uses Mackay's arguments against determinism and concludes that in the ultimate sense man is responsible for his decisions; however, man cannot be blamed for those decisions that are affected by constitutional and hereditary factors. Finally, he says that all men have freedom to respond to one another.

In chapter eight, the author discusses the issue of conversion, especially the psychological accounts of religious conversion. He makes an attempt to relate the psychological explanations of religious conversions to the traditional Christian explanation. He discusses

three types of explanation: (1) Social-learning type theories, (2) Psycho-dynamic type theories, and (3) Psychophysiological types of explanation. The author does not object to the scientific approach to the phenomenon of conversion, but hesitates to evaluate the truth which one gains as a result of conversion. It seems that the author is more interested in the outcome of conversion rather than in its process. He makes it very clear that God, who is the source of religious conversion, cannot be subjected to any psychological or physiological enquiry.

In chapter nine, the author tries to impress upon the readers the need to understand that psychology and religion have their own respective languages, and that much conflict could be avoided if people realize this fact. The author affirms that moral behaviour should be based on the Scriptures. For the author, psychology produces contextual morality, whereas religion gives a morality for all times. After this, the author takes up the issue of guilt and asserts that the problem of guilt is both psychological and theological. However, the author stresses that neurotic guilt has its basis in man's sinfulness; but the sinner need not always be neurotic. The author ignores the fact that, in the absence of a cultural context, it is difficult to label anyone neurotic.

The title of the tenth chapter is *God: Comforting Illusion or Demanding Reality?* He begins this chapter by saying that the discussion on Freud's theories of religion was nothing but a waste of time; and, yet he proceeds to outline them briefly, only to point out their errors. He recognizes the importance of some of the theories of Freud in understanding religious behaviour, but rejects any suggestion that these could confirm or deny the truth of the existence of God.

Freud's idea of religion as a wish fulfilment is considered as nothing but an over-simplification, which suits only the non-believer. He criticizes Freud's views on the origin of religion, especially the connection of the Oedipus complex with the origin of religion. He feels that these views were based on a limited anthropological knowledge, and dubs them as wrong. After this the author deals with Freud's views on developed religion, taking into consideration his two books: *The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and its Discontents*. He challenges these views and claims that as far as Christianity is concerned it is based on historical facts and not on illusions or unconscious strivings. Then he discusses some other psychoanalysts, rejecting their views and concluding that the roots of religious behaviour are so complex that psychological explanations should not be accepted without critical examination. Finally, these psychological explanations tell more about the person rather than about God.

In his last chapter, the author summarizes briefly the matter presented in the previous chapters. He reasserts that conflict between religion and psychology could be avoided if the two approaches are kept as separate approaches. However, he recognizes that a deeper understanding of religious behaviour is possible with the help of other disciplines.

The author feels that ministers should spend more time in proclaiming the unique message of the Christian faith than in imitating other roles, such as social workers or marriage counsellors. The author feels that this trend may be due to lack of confidence in the Lord. I think that the author has diagnosed the problem, but wrongly. Perhaps, it would be true to say that many ministers who have entered into these professions have not lost their faith, but have become aware of the various possibilities of proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ.

Books of this sort help to maintain *status quo* and keep the Christian faith sterile and irrelevant. Repeating phrases from the Bible which do not give any meaning to persons does nothing except to evoke religious sentiments. Religion should be an authentic experience and should give power to people so that they can meet their life situations courageously. However, it is good for a student of psychology or religion to know about this book.

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The Saints of Scotland: by E. S. Towill. The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1978. Pp. 148. Price £ 1.95.

The author provides in this book 'a series of mini-biographies of forty-five of the better known saints, and brief notes on many more.' In his Preface he explains that it is not just Scottish saints with whom he is concerned, but with all those commemorated in the church dedications of his land and also those commemorated 'in the titles of towns, villages, farms and ancient ruins, in natural features like hills and wells and in local folk-lore and legend.' This gives a fairly wide range of choice, but the fact remains that interest is confined to Scotland itself.

This limits the appeal and usefulness of the book. If we are looking for an account of the really great heroes of the faith down the centuries, as recorded in the history of the universal Church, we shall not find it here. Not more than about a quarter of the names dealt with would fall within that category; and the selection is based on geographical accident, not on importance. Thus we have notes on Andrew and John (both the Evangelist and the Baptist) but not on Peter or Paul or Matthew; there is, for example, no mention of Augustine of Hippo or Francis of Assisi.

Another difficulty is one which confronts everyone who sets out to write a book of biographical notes on the saints: For whom does he write? What class of readers does he have in mind—historians? theologians? the parish clergy? the man in the pew? the general reader? the secondary school pupil? the Sunday School child? The

class of reader at which he aims must affect both his style of writing and his selection of facts. And by so limiting his aim he will inevitably make his book less attractive and useful to those outside his chosen field. My guess is that Mr Towill's book is intended primarily for the parochial clergy and the well instructed laity of the Church in Scotland.

Inevitably it will have a limited appeal outside that country, but for people who wish to have a book of reference dealing with its particular field, and for libraries, it will serve a useful purpose.

The saints are dealt with in alphabetical order, but it would have been an advantage to have included an index, to save the necessity of leafing through the pages to find out which names are dealt with and which are omitted.

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Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern: by D. S. Russell. S.C.M. Press, London, 1978. Pp. viii + 86. Price £ 1.10.

As Dr Russell points out, 'For many years, . . . apocalyptic has tended to be the Cinderella among biblical and theological studies' (p. 4). Harnack dismissed it as 'an evil inheritance which the Christians took over from the Jews.'

Apocalyptic did, it is true, have its champions, such as R. H. Charles, who, in his *Religious Developments between the Old and the New Testaments* (1914), concluded that 'Prophecy and apocalyptic are, in the main, concerned with the same objects, that they use, in the main, the same methods, but that, whereas the scope of prophecy was limited as regards time and space, that of apocalyptic was as wide as the universe and as unlimited as time. . . . It was from the apocalyptic side of Judaism that Christianity was born.' Such opinions, however, were uncommon. More recently scholars such as H. H. Rowley (*The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 1944), Klaus Koch (*Ratlos verder Apokalyptik*, 1970; ET *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 1972) and D. S. Russell himself (*The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 1964) have also provided a more positive assessment of apocalyptic.

In *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern*, Dr Russell seeks not only to find valuable elements in apocalyptic thought, but to suggest that it is peculiarly relevant to the contemporary situation.

The attempt is to be welcomed. At the very least it helps to rescue apocalyptic from its exclusive use by certain Christian extremist sects. And the suggestions are of interest. For example, Dr Russell finds several parallels between the situation in which apocalyptic

flourished and the contemporary world : in both situations there is a confusing conflation of cultures, in both there is pressure to conform to a culture which is alien to the faith, in both societies there is deprivation of human rights and so on. There is also an useful section in which Dr Russell shows how in the New Testament apocalyptic is 'transmuted and transformed.' This in itself rules out certain uses of apocalyptic. 'Slide-rule theology which calculates times and seasons with allegorical arithmetic. . . has no place in the teaching of Jesus and should have no place in the *kerygma* of his church' (pp. 58-59).

But while the book is suggestive, the difficult hermeneutical questions remain unresolved. Is it, for example, really possible to strip away the 'esoteric trappings' of apocalyptic in order to 'uncover its timeless message' (p. 67)? Are not form and content more integrally related than that? And supposing it is possible to cut through the form to timeless truth, will the truths which are laid bare be peculiar to apocalyptic? Dr Russell himself suggests otherwise when he begins a sentence, 'In apocalyptic and New Testament thought generally . . .'

These are difficult problems and it is perhaps unfair to expect a slim and popular book to resolve them. Within the intended limits it is an excellent little book.

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A Plain Man in the Holy Land: by James Martin. The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1978. Pp. ix + 100. Price £ 1.50.

This book is intended 'both for those who have visited the Holy Land and those who hope to visit it; and also for those who never will be there.' Mr Martin is an experienced leader of pilgrimages to the Holy Land and in this book he tries to include the reader as a member of one of his parties. Accompanying the text are some well chosen black and white photographs.

This is well done. Anyone who knows Israel will find his memories vividly rekindled. Those who are planning to go will find it a useful and readable preparation. And those who would like to go but see no chance of doing so will almost feel they are seeing the places at second-hand as they read the book.

While anyone would be well guided under Mr Martin's experienced leadership, I am afraid that I would find some of his evidently frequently used phrases rather irritating. He himself refers to his 'constantly reiterated dictum' that 'in the Holy Land you must always try to see the holy thing behind the holy place.' This is intended to

assuage the disappointment of pilgrims who find that the holy place has been all but obliterated beneath the constructions which Christian piety has erected. But if it is only the holy thing which matters, then surely one must wonder why it is worth going at all. Perhaps unwittingly, the author has raised an issue which was mentioned in a recent book review in *IJT*: 'Since time has more revelatory significance than place, the traditional fervour of Christian pilgrims for "holy places" is to be understood as a paganizing distortion of biblical religion' (Vol. 27, p. 36).

That may be an overstatement. It is certainly the case that many thousands of pilgrims to the Holy Land find that their faith has been refreshed and deepened. And they will find this book a great help.

On p. 30 the heights of Jerusalem above and Jericho below sea level are incorrectly given.

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The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: by George M. Soares Prabhu, SJ. Biblical Pontifical Institute Press (Analecta Biblia 63), Rome, 1976. Pp. xv + 346. Price \$ 17.50.

A closely argued doctoral dissertation is not easy to summarise in a review. The quantum of work that lies behind the book is indicated by the eighteen pages of Bibliography and the six pages of the Index of Names that follow the three hundred pages of text. In addition there are footnotes that sometimes occupy half or more of the page and which are often as interesting and important as the text itself. As the sub-title indicates, the book is 'An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Matthew 1-2.' It was prepared under the direction of the Revd. X. Leon-Dufour and presented to the Theological Faculty of Fourviere-Lyons.

The argument is presented systematically, identifying and stating the problem in each case, discussing previous solutions, and then providing new reasons and insights which lead to a new conclusion.

The Formula Quotations chosen for study are identified and the reasons for the selection given first. These are Matthew 2:23, 2:15, 1:22f., 2:18 and 2:6. The history of these quotations, their place in the Old Testament, the text types that are represented in them, the redactional changes introduced and the probable reasons for them are all discussed.

The author agrees with the generally held notion that the 'Infancy narrative is a *theological* prologue to the Gospel.' The theological perspective represented in the narrative is that of a 'providentially directed, prophetically predicted history of the Messiah, rejected by his own people, but making disciples of all nations.'

Dr Prabhu sees the five passages in which the quotation formula occurs as forming three units : A. A unit consisting of three dream narratives (Matt. 1:18-25; 2:13-15; 2:19-23); B. The story of the gentile Magi paying homage to the apocalyptic King of the Jews (Matt. 2:1-2, 9b-12); and C. The opposition of Herod which recalls the boyhood of Moses and the Exodus (Matt. 2:1-2, 3-9a, 16-18).

The detailed discussion of the passages involved and their Old Testament antecedents is of great value not only exegetically, but even more in understanding the history of scriptural tradition; it shows how passages are understood and reinterpreted at successive stages of history, incorporating new insights and meeting new opportunities and taking account of new events.

This is not a book for the general and uninitiated reader, but for the scholar and the student. Anyone who really intends to take seriously the Old Testament allusions and quotations in the New will find in this book a mine of information.

A number of minor misprints have been noted, but none that causes difficulty to the reader.

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