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Reviews

The Vision and Mission of Jesus, Arthur H. Curtis. (T. & T. Clark, 27s.).

It is difficult to do justice in a short notice to this very stimulating and suggestive study. Its main theme is the intimate association in the Bible of Vision and Commission, an association which has an imperative for the Church.

Mr. Curtis writes in the conviction that the Baptism-Temptation story has received in general too little attention in the interpretation of the Ministry of our Lord. In the Old Testament vision and commission are the two essential aspects of the prophetic experience: God expresses Himself in an "outgoing activity" and the prophet receives a commission which involves complete commitment to the way of Divine action. Jesus at His baptism has a revelation of the Holy Spirit. "Thou art My Son" involves His commission and self-committal. The nature and direction of the commission are shown in the Temptation. Here it is insufficient to regard it as a temptation to doubt the reality of the call "If thou be . . ."). It essentially concerns the mode by which God establishes His sovereign will—by the suffering of His Servant in a rebellious world in meekness and gentleness, rather than by transcendent intervention in the physical order.

In this light, Mr. Curtis seeks to interpret the whole ministry, the "mystery of the Kingdom," the words and acts of the Lord, which are the sign and authentication of the Divine activity, accessible then to those who believe in Him and commit themselves in faith. The misunderstandings of the disciples are the marks of the impatience of imperfect faith which awaited the gift of the Holy Spirit for their correction.

The second part of the book discusses the unity and mission of the Church. The analogy of the prophetic experience and that of Christ Himself indicates that the commission of the Church springs from the Vision of the Risen Lord and the ensuing gift of the Spirit. (In his interpretation of the Resurrection Mr. Curtis rejects the antithesis subjective-objective as offering categories that are inadequate. It is no demonstrable fact: its reality is manifest only to faith).

Christians face complex issues in modern life—economic, political, ecclesiastical. The triple temptation of Jesus is directly relevant to these issues. In them all the Church is prone to compromises, on which point the author has some searching comments.

The true mission of the Church is determined by the complete self-committal of Christians to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as this is reflected in the Ministry of the Lord.

The book is preceded by some thirty pages which the author terms "Findings on Propositional Form." Many a reader may be perplexed by them unless he relegates them to the end of the book, when they will be read with greater advantage. They may well offer to the preacher many a vital hint, not least for their pregnancy and challenge. We cite two at random as examples:

"To know, in the Bible, means to be willing to acknowledge, to commit oneself; not to know, in the Bible, means to ignore."

"Christendom has compromised with nationalism and empire for 1,500 years. Her illegitimate children threaten to devour each other and her."

Studies in Christian Social Commitment—a Christian Pacifist Symposium. Edited by John Ferguson. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.).

Canon Grensted writes a foreword to this small but important book of seven essays by eminent Christian scholars. The foreword sets the problem as something more than one of individual conscience and choice. The churches have expressed their condemnation of war: the emergence of the ecumenical nature of the Church makes nonsense of it. This is the main theme of Dr. John Hick's essay on "The Structure of the War Problem." It is a plea for the reformulation of the question on a corporate basis. "If the Christian revelation is true, there can be no power of evil strong enough to compel Christian people, united in faith to their one Lord, to wage war upon one another." Dr. Hick suggests that a shift of attention from the purely individual to a corporate Christian responsibility may provide a needed common ground for the thought of pacifist and non-pacifist. Dr. E. L. Allen's essay urges that pacifism should be regarded as committal rather than as a policy, but committal in terms of the whole Christian community. In this way the merely negative aspect of pacifism can be transcended by the Church as it gives its witness within the whole life of the community. The other essays, "Justice and Love" by Dr. John Ferguson, "The Church's Ministry of Suffering" by Dr. G. F. Nuttall, "The Distinctive Dimension of Christian Social Action" by Professor Nels Ferre, and "Christian Obedience" by Professor H. D. Lewis, are valuable contributions to a book which merits careful study by pacifist and non-pacifist alike.

A Way of Survival, Arthur W. Munk. (Bookman Associates, New York, \$3.).

Though there may be little in this book which has not been said often, what the author has to say needs continuous emphasis, in the light of much uncritical acceptance of the dogma of "peace

through power." The book is especially welcome as coming from the U.S.A. where, one feels, it may come under heavier fire than in this country. "Whether we like it or not," Mr. Munk says bluntly, "our foreign policy has been a failure." But this is no mere criticism by an American citizen of his own country's policy which we can regard with complacency. It is a wholesale indictment of the prevailing attitudes which contribute to the present menacing situation of the world—the materialistic philosophy of power, aided by fatalistic or escapist attitudes. Mr. Munk then seeks to outline the essentials of a "philosophy of peace." Many things are excellently said, notably the necessity to regain respect for the worth of human personality, and the refusal to disdain the power of moral pressure even in our present world. But the Christian will feel that the foundations are shaky, for Mr. Munk brings us back to the concept of the "struggling God," and sees this idea of a limited yet powerful God struggling with evil as the real challenge to high adventure.

After a strong chapter on "The supposed enemy and the real enemy," Mr. Munk suggests a synoptic approach to peace which seeks to do justice to all factors, geographical and economic, biological and psychological, as well as the political and military. Finally, finding rays of hope in the gloom, he suggests eight essentials of strategy and action, which conceive peace as not merely something to be hoped for, but as an immediate goal for the utmost striving.

W. S. DAVIES

God in His World, by Charles S. Duthie. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.).

I read this book in bits and pieces. A seasonal requirement took me first of all to the last chapter, entitled "In the power of the Spirit." I then jumped back to chapter 5: "The Fellowship of the Spirit." And so on. Each chapter I found to be a gem. Then when I came to read the book from beginning to end the cumulative effect was to leave the impression that this is the most satisfying book on the theme that I have ever read.

The theme, "God in His World" might suggest a book on theology. It is not that although its theological insights are penetrating, especially in the chapters entitled "Our Matchless Christ" and "Glorious Thoughts of God." But evangelism is really the theme of the book: the theology behind evangelism, the quality of life required in the individual Christian and in the Church for its effective exercise, and the technique of evangelism.

What strikes one above all else is the saneness of the book. Take, for instance, chapter 6, "Engagement with the World." Here

is a masterly treatment (without any "cleverness") of what Paul Tillich calls "The method of correlation" of the Gospel and "life today." "The Church and the Christian have no choice save to keep moving between Gospel and situation," insists Dr. Duthie. He issues salutary warnings to those, on the one hand, who concentrate on "the unchanging gospel" without taking seriously the age in which they live and so "end by throwing our message at the people"; and to those on the other hand who become so obsessed with the contemporary situation that they "emasculate the message in a premature attempt to make it fit."

Dr Duthie believes that the restlessness of modern man, his wistful questioning and, in some cases, the feeling of his need "so smartingly that the great questions *ask* themselves" point to a very real approach to God. The Gospel and the fellowship of a real Christian community are alone adequate in such a situation. But Dr. Duthie does not just use well-worn phrases. He works out the implications of his statements. The practical common-sense of the closing chapters leaves without excuse those in our churches who claim to be bewildered. A rare book this.

The Primacy of Preaching Today, by Arthur A. Cowan. (T. & T. Clark, 7s. 6d.).

Prophetic Preaching, by E. Gordon Rupp. (The Berean Press, 2s.).

Can anything new be said about preaching at this time of day? In spite of the 'Today' in the title, Dr. Cowan's book covers for the most part very familiar ground. Nor is there a great deal of freshness in the presentation. One gets the feeling that previously prepared material dictated the form of these lectures. Indeed, the chapters on "Expository Preaching" and "Doctrinal Preaching" seem to consist of sermon themes strung together with appropriate comments rather than lectures on the subject illustrated by sermon outlines. In his preface Dr. Cowan expresses the hope that "the interpretations and illustrations given in these pages will be helpful to the parish minister in his pulpit preparation." But it is in a collection like Campbell Morgan's "Searchlights from the Word" that one would look for this kind of thing and not in the Warrack Lectures on Preaching.

Professor Gordon Rupp's Joseph Smith Memorial Lecture, on the other hand, is a supremely satisfying work. Rarely have so many gems been packed into such small space. Mr. Rupp develops the theme of the people of God as "a prophetic community" with freshness and brilliance of figure. It is great stuff. What Mr. Rupp calls the "five great notes of prophetic preaching" are dealt with in a quite unforgettable way. For example, he thinks he has seen

“modern man” before, in the opening of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*: “And behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house . . . looking for a way of deliverance.” “But between Bunyan’s Pilgrim and Modern Man,” writes Mr. Rupp, “there is a difference. Modern Man has no longer the Book in his hand, and he is no longer able to believe Evangelist. He faces the same shattering experiences, the same anxieties and fears, but the dimension of eternity is missing. He is no longer a Pilgrim, but a Displaced Person. He has heroism, but no faith; endurance, but no hope.” This insight and the ability to present it graphically to the reader pervades the whole lecture.

People Matter, and other talks for women, by Marjorie Dawes.
(Carey Kingsgate Press, 5s.).

It is most fitting that this book should be reviewed by one who holds the prize for being the world’s worst speaker-at-women’s-meetings. For he above all others knows how the thing should be done who cannot do it himself. This book has everything. The ‘approach’ is here. The reviewer remembers hearing Dr. E. J. Tongue begin an address to 300 women in a Bristol meeting by telling them how many cups and saucers and plates they washed in a year. He then treated them to some good, sound stuff. And they took it. The washing-up had done the trick. And so Miss (no, she must be Mrs.) Dawes starts off by describing how once she undertook to wash the ceiling of her pretty kitchen and the ensuing agony of an aching back. “I decided that standing with one’s hands raised was one of the most tiring jobs in the world.” The talk is on “Holding Moses’ hands.” See? And so it goes on. And on a fine variety of topics. A capital book. The one snag is, if I may be permitted an Irishism, that it will be difficult for anyone to use these talks because they are so good that everyone else will have done so already.

J. ITHEL JONES

Baptist World Fellowship. A Short History of the Baptist World Alliance, by F. Townley Lord. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 7s. 6d.).

When it was decided to publish, for the first time, a history of the Baptist World Alliance, the Executive made the best of possible choices in asking Dr. Townley Lord to undertake the task of writing the book. Not only does he know the Alliance from the inside, but his presidential journeyings have made him familiar with Baptist life and work in all the continents and, moreover, he possesses literary

gifts, as we all know, of a high order. The result is what one would expect—a volume which makes fascinating reading. It traces the story of the Alliance from the birth of the idea in the mind of John Rippon in the eighteenth century, through the years and across the continents, right up to the eve of the Jubilee Congress, describing its outstanding leaders, the growth of its activities, and the development of its organisation and giving vivid pictures of those successive Congresses in different parts of the world which have been as milestones on the road to Baptist world fellowship. As Dr. Payne points out in the postscript, the Alliance is one of a series of confessional organisations which have come into being during the past eighty years and, although the youngest of them, is one of the most sturdy and influential. Its story is a remarkable record of increasing numbers, deepening unity, developing co-operation and widespread ministries of service, all fittingly symbolised in its adopted emblem. Here in this volume that story is told with knowledge, imagination and skill, and one hopes that Baptists everywhere will obtain a copy and pass on to others, especially the young, something of the message and inspiration of this narrative and of the world-encircling fellowship whose history is, in these pages, so admirably recorded.

The Baptists of the World and their Overseas Missions, by Ernest A. Payne. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1s. 6d.).

The contents of this valuable booklet were delivered at Birmingham in March as the third H. L. Hemmens Memorial Lecture. Showing that as far back as Menno Simmons our people have realised their missionary obligations, Dr. Payne outlines the development of missionary interest and enterprise among the Baptists of the world and draws attention to their need of a common strategy and of considering their relationship to the work of other communions. Commenting also upon Baptist pioneering, Bible translation and the co-ordination of home and foreign obligations, he closes on a note of wonder at the remarkable story of Baptist missionary endeavour. All who have any interest in our overseas witness should read this lucid, interesting and informative booklet.

Baptists who made History and Great Baptist Women, both ed. A. S. Clement. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 7s. 6d. and 6s. 6d.).

The Carey Kingsgate Press did well to mark the Jubilee Congress of the Baptist World Alliance by the publication of a number of new books, including these two useful volumes. Each provides brief biographies of Baptist men and women who, in various fields

of service, attained eminence. Inevitably the treatment is a little sketchy but, within the limits of space at their disposal, the two teams of writers have done their work excellently. Among the thirteen essays in the first book, the stories of Oncken, Alexander McDonald and Paul Besson will be less familiar than the others, while the second—entirely by Baptist women writers—is all the more interesting by reason of the fact that the stories of the eleven women of whom it tells are, on the whole, little known. Beginning with Dorothy Hazzard, of seventeenth-century Bristol, the succession of great women is brought up-to-date with essays on Mrs. Rowntree Clifford and Mary Eleanor Bowser (Mrs. H. L. Taylor). There is splendid material here for more than one series of addresses and much that would make useful illustrations for sermons. For their own sakes, however, the books are well worth reading and ought to be on every Baptist's bookshelves. It should be added, too, that they are well printed and attractive in appearance.

New Testament Treasure, by W. Gordon Robinson. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.).

Here are fifty-two studies in the New Testament which have all appeared in Dr. Robinson's weekly column in the *Christian World*. Those who have already read them here will be glad to have them gathered together for permanent reference in one volume. To those who have not, this instructive and fascinating book may heartily be commended. It takes the reader on a journey of discovery through the pages of the New Testament during which his guide is constantly showing him something new or helping him to see old familiar things in a new light. It is all done with a simplicity which almost conceals the scholarship and the skill with which Dr. Robinson conducts the quest. Preachers will find it a godsend. All lovers of the Bible will be grateful for it. Here is treasure indeed!

Papalism and Politics, by Nathaniel Micklem. (Independent Press, 1s.).

The contention of this valuable but disturbing booklet (which comprises a revision of a series of articles which appeared last year in the *British Weekly*) is that while Romanism as a religion is characterised by much that is admirable, the Vatican represents "an extremely powerful and most secret political engine," the prime motive of which, in its day-to-day policies, is expediency. Dr. Micklem illustrates his point by reference to, among other things, the organisation of the Vatican State, Thomism and the Encyclicals, and the evidence of the Concordats. Finally he refers to certain

volumes published in 1948 which claim to contain transcripts of confidential Vatican documents, and shows that if these volumes are genuine they prove the Vatican to have sources of secret information on State affairs. We commend this booklet to the attention of all. Dr. Micklem, certainly no bigot, concludes that Vatican policy involves a constant grasping after political power and is incompatible with freedom. "Papalism in politics is a sinister movement."

The Congregational Ministry in the Modern World, edited by H. Cunliffe-Jones. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.).

Perhaps the most notable feature of this useful symposium—written for the bicentenary of the Yorkshire United Independent College, Bradford—is that its fifteen contributors are all past students or present staff of the College. If, without suggesting invidious distinctions, we quote only the names of A. R. Vine, Daniel Jenkins, Horton Davies, John Marsh, Trevor Davies, B. C. Plowright and H. Cunliffe-Jones, it is enough to indicate what a remarkable contribution this College has made to Congregationalism and, moreover, to the cause of Christ in Britain today. As for the book itself, it presents an illuminating study, from many angles, of the theory and practice of the Congregational ministry. But, by far the greater part is equally relevant to the Christian ministry generally and may, therefore, be read with interest and profit by all who are concerned with the ministry in the modern world. Certainly Baptists will find what this varied team of writers has to say of interest and value and we commend it to their attention.