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Book Reviews

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# Book Reviews

The presence of non-theological students in the audience seems to have an exhilarating effect on professors of theology. The courses of 'open' lectures at Cambridge given by Principal Whale and Canon Vidler have produced the best short accounts of Christian doctrine since James Denney's *Studies in Theology*, and now Professor Leonard Hodgson of Oxford has joined the select band with his *Christian Faith and Practice* (Blackwell, 8s. 6d.).

When Dr. Hodgson became Professor in 1938 he was confronted by a complaint addressed to senior members of the University by the S.C.M. The University was a Christian institution and conferred degrees in the name of the Trinity. Yet it neither required nor provided instruction in the Christian Faith for candidates for its degrees apart from the theological specialist. Dr. Hodgson met this challenge by providing an annual course of seven lectures, open to all members of the University, on Christian Faith and Practice. These lectures are now presented to a wider public and we can be grateful for them.

Dr. Hodgson first made his name as a Christian philosopher. His *Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy* (1936) and *Towards a Christian Philosophy* (1942) are treasured by all fortunate enough to possess them. It may be unkind to suggest that the less he is a philosopher the more he is a theologian. Yet it is clear that the recent writings on theology are in a different class from an earlier essay on the Incarnation written when the author was mainly preoccupied with philosophical studies. On the other hand, the effect of the discipline of his earlier years is seen in the clarity of thought and economy of language which distinguishes his later books and is reflected in the very useful analysis of the argument of each chapter.

The seven lectures attempt to give 'a synoptic view of what Christianity is', and in so far as this can be done in just over 100 pages, Dr. Hodgson has succeeded. He knows what he believes and sets it down with clarity and tolerance, with apt quotation and reference, and often with vivid, humorous illustration. There is no waste of time on unimportant detail. The book keeps to the centre of things and says what the teacher of the Gospel would want to say had he the similar power of insight and expression. At many points the reader is led to stop and think out for himself the implication of what he reads. Whether he be teacher or student of theology, he will find this book creative of further thought. It is this quality which makes a book written in England of real value for the theologian in India. It is not so wedded to particular background as to be unfruitful on another. For those who are familiar with the present reviewer's attempt to distinguish between *dogma* and *doctrine* it is enough to say that these seven lectures take us very close to the given truth of the Biblical revelation which must underlie any expression in doctrine worthy of being called Christian.

Two of the main themes of this book have been developed in greater detail by the writer. His *Doctrine of the Trinity*, a masterpiece of lucid exposition, has already won wide acceptance and, in at least one theological college in India, is regarded as a necessary discipline in the final year. Now we have *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (Nisbet, 10s. 6d.) in which Dr. Hodgson's genius and insight are devoted to the theme which first occupied him as a young man and to which he has returned with all the mature judgment gained in the intervening years.

This is not just another of the books on the Atonement which follow a conventional pattern varied only by the personality of the writer. There is justice in the claim of *distinctive* treatment. In particular, Dr. Hodgson sets the work of Christ in the context of evil as a whole, stressing ignorance, ugliness and suffering as well as sin. Against this four-fold evil God has been at work on behalf of man from the beginning, and is still at work in the continuing life of the Church which is the instrument through which Christ, crucified and risen, saves the world.

In the course of the argument, the author touches on many of those who have trod the same path before him, showing how the different elements of truth in their expositions do throw light on the manifold wisdom of God in 'taking upon Himself, not in words to explain that all is well, but in deeds to ensure that all shall be well.'

The stress on the Church as the saved and saving community of God and the many profitable digressions in the argument do not, however, detract from the centrality of the death of Christ in whom everything has climax and completion. In Him we see God directly attacking the hard core of the problem of evil—sin, and so making it possible to deliver us from evil.

The argument is persuasive and the field covered is vast. But what most impresses in the book is the harmony of reason and piety making it apt for the study and pulpit alike. The debt of the Christian world to Dr. Hodgson is very great indeed.

The space allotted to the reviewer is nearly complete but we cannot allow this first number of *I.J.T.* to appear without making brief reference to one of the most remarkable books of recent years: J. E. Fison: *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit* (Longmans, 8s. 6d.; paper covers, 5s. 6d.). To those who believe that the recovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the great need of the present age this book is treasure indeed.

Canon Fison, whose horizons have been enlarged by years of missionary work in the East, is something of a prophet. He spares not in a vigorous condemnation of the present situation of the Church and lays the blame evenly between the liberals, the priests and the catholics whose mistaken emphases have shattered the integrity of the faith. He is certainly a scholar, and this plea for the recovery by the Church of the Spirit's Blessing is couched mainly in the form of an admirable essay in Biblical Theology.

The book is a challenge to mind and action and we commend it strongly and without reserve as the clearest and most comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit which has appeared for many years. It meets an urgent need and meets it in a manner that is truly relevant.

MARCUS WARD

*Man in the Old Testament*, by Walther Eichrodt. S.C.M. Press.  
6 shillings.

Its editors make the claim for the series 'Studies in Biblical Theology', to which this book is the most recent addition, that it is 'intended to provide a platform for the work of scholars who are sharing in the revival of Biblical theology which is one of the most striking features common to many different branches of the Church'. This statement provides a clue to the nature of this particular book,—it is not simply one more book on one aspect of Hebrew religion, such as the development of the idea of man, since the author's thought moves in the realm of theology, rather than of psychology or anthropology. The emphasis throughout the book is ethical, so that the study of Man is continually brought into relation with his response to the will of God, particularly as that is expressed in the Covenant-relationship.

Whereas previous writers on this subject have tended to express themselves in terms of the developing ethical or social consciousness of the Hebrews, relating the religion of Biblical times to survivals from primitive Semitic animism, Dr. Eichrodt dwells instead on the unity underlying the Old Testament, so that foreign nations and their religions are introduced, not in order to illustrate their influence on Hebrew religion, but as examples of the contrast between the faith of Israel and its environment. This may be seen, for example, in the first chapter, where the author expounds the Law of Israel in terms of the divine 'Thou shalt', which, in contrast to what we find in other ancient law-codes, invades secular civil law. The underlying unity of the Old Testament, to which reference has already been made, is a characteristic theme of this book, and at times Dr. Eichrodt appears to lay undue emphasis on this unity. An example is his development of the thought that 'man's basic mood in relation to his task and his destiny is one of joy', which he illustrates not only from the book of Deuteronomy and from the Psalms, but also from the superficialities of 'Ecclesiastes', with his advice 'to eat, and to drink, and to be merry'.

Although the book is divided into four chapters, these are by no means of equal length, and it is an indication of the ethical emphasis throughout the book that the third chapter, entitled 'The Antinomies of the Unconditional Ought', occupies 35 of the book's 70 pages, and more than half of that chapter is concerned with the problems of suffering and sin. In the introduction to this chapter we reach the turning-point in the book. Up to this stage it has been concerned with the 'ought' arising out of the 'I-Thou' relationship with God, the 'ought' which 'stands over human life with an all-embracing and unconditional obligation, and gives life direction'. In the remainder of the book, Dr. Eichrodt considers the contradictions to this 'ought' which arise from the circumstances of human life, and from the character of man as he is. This involves a masterly discussion of the problems of life as they are exemplified in the book of Job with its emphasis on the 'incomprehensibly wonderful Creator God, who cannot be caught in a system of reasonable purposes, but escapes all human calculation'.

Dr. Eichrodt's study is of value, not only for the insight we are given into the religious unity underlying the Old Testament, but also for the passages in which he discusses other religious and philosophical systems in the light of the Old Testament. Thus he reminds us that the prophetic

movement never led to asceticism in the sense of the demand for poverty and celibacy. 'The figure of the hermit, fleeing the world, or the begging monk, to be found in every cultural religion, never appears within the Old Testament framework of existence.' The world, according to the Old Testament, is not something from which one escapes,—it is the situation in which God's will 'assumes definite and unrecurrent form, in which it demands obedience'. The title of the final chapter, 'Life under the Promise' rightly suggests that the author is concerned not only with the relation between the Old Testament and its fulfilment in the New, but also with the tension under which man makes his decision here and now, which precludes the artificial satisfaction of rest in a closed monistic system.

In mentioning that the book contains only 70 pages, I have omitted to point out that almost all these pages contain footnotes, chiefly in the form of Biblical references. By this means the author allows the Bible to speak for itself, so that he is able to compress a great deal of material into a small compass. It is a pity, therefore, that more care could not have been taken by the translators in ensuring that the references were accurate. The following are among the mistakes in the footnotes, all of which are reproduced in the index:

- p. 19 note 13 for II Kings read I Kings.
- p. 58 ,, 56 for Ps. 3.7 read Ps. 37.
- p. 72 ,, 86 for Sol. read Wisdom of Solomon.
- p. 76 ,, 4 for Josh. 4. 18 read Joel 4. 18 (EV 3. 18).

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