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THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

ECUMENICAL NUMBER

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Book Reviews

Christ of the New Testament, by A. W. Argyle. Published by the Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., London, W.C. 1. Price 10/6.

This is a straightforward and most readable book setting forth the New Testament doctrine of Christ after a careful examination of evidence. A happy feature of the book is that it focuses the attention on the cardinal points of the teaching of the New Testament avoiding complicated discussions of a technical character. Further, the reader's attention is frequently drawn to the oft neglected aspects of the Christological doctrine. Though the scope of enquiry is limited to the documents of the New Testament the writer brings to bear upon the discussion his wide knowledge of the subject.

In the opening chapter Mr. Argyle remarks that the task of New Testament theology is to give expression to the conviction that Jesus is God and man. He essays to show how the New Testament teaching repudiates docetism, adoptionism and Apollonianism and comments on the inadequacy of the Kenotic theory. He observes that the purpose of Phil. 2:5-10 on which the Kenotic theories are based is homilistical and practical rather than metaphysical. 'How can the Divine become human while remaining Divine?' This is the perennial problem of Christology. The author discusses the Logos doctrine with the suggestion that it is fruitful of solution. The Logos doctrine made a sudden and dramatic entry into Christian thought through St. John's Gospel and made an equally sudden exit after engaging the attention of the Christian Platonists of Alexandria. In recent years it was Brunner who said that the Logos doctrine was an indispensable basis for the reconstruction of Christology. When St. John said 'the Word was with (the) God and the Word was God', he was affirming both the identity and distinction between God and the Word. The Word has its whole being within Deity and at the same time the relationship between Deity and the Word is one of intimate personal relationship, the supreme example of which is the Father-Son relationship. The Logos dwells in men as light and life in as much as men are the offspring of God. Thus it is the basis of kinship between man and God. The Logos conception provides us with the principle of mediation which is essential for determining the relationship between God and creation, and pre-eminently between God and the Incarnation. As stated by St. John the Logos doctrine establishes the kinship between God and man on the one hand, and on the other provides the most satisfactory theory for understanding the how of the Incarnation.

In the next chapter the writer goes on to show that the supreme value of the Incarnation lies in the death of Jesus. This essential relationship between the Incarnation and the cross is something frequently forgotten in our preaching. The preaching of the cross must always

include the Incarnation as the New Testament links them together. In the same chapter the author points out that the fact of the Virgin Birth of our Lord is not intended to provide with an additional argument for the divinity of Jesus. Its value lay in that while it proclaimed the divinity of Jesus it established His humanity. The prevailing heresy in the 1st century was docetism which minimized the humanity of our Lord, and the doctrine of the Virgin Birth guarded the truth contained in 'the Word *became flesh*.'

Of the various interpretations of the death of Jesus Mr. Argyle supports the theory that it is victory won over the powers of evil and death, but he hastens to add that the conception of victory is more frequently associated in the New Testament teaching with the resurrection of Jesus. This should help us to view the cross and resurrection not so much as two separate events but as a single act wrought for the salvation of mankind. One is grateful to the writer for the forceful reminder that 'salvation in the New Testament is a gradual eschatological process starting with justification by the cross, but including the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the ultimate glorifying of the persevering believer by God in the final consummation'. Perhaps one ought to add that the whole process is carried out in the sphere of the Church.

That the resurrection of Jesus constituted the victory over the forces of evil and death, and that our resurrection consequent on our union in faith with Christ is a present experience, are among the important ideas expressed in the chapter on the resurrection. But the author weakens his case for resurrection when he says, 'Immortality of the soul is implied in the doctrine of the Logos and the doctrine of Immortality is useful as correcting the spatial and temporal associations which cling to the idea of resurrection'. While this may be true as far it goes the Christian hope is certainly 'the resurrection of the body'.

The chapter on the exaltation of Jesus points to the errors into which we are likely to fall unless we hold fast to the facts of ascension, and the ascension of Jesus is on the right hand of God. Eternal life as the present possession, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are dependent upon the exaltation of Jesus.

Any book on doctrine which takes us back to the New Testament is most valuable and hence to be warmly welcomed. This is abundantly true of the book under review. As it is written in such a simple and attractive style it is likely to be in great demand by the laity and ordinands alike.

E. Sambayya

Biblical Authority For Today, Ed. A. Richardson & W. Schweitzer.
S.C.M. Press, London. Price 18s.

The Church of the New Testament, L. G. Champion. Carey Kingsgate Press, London Price 7s. 6d.

These two apparently diverse volumes, received simultaneously for review by coincidence rather than design, proved to have an unexpected mutual relevance. The former is a symposium produced by the World

Council of Churches as a result of conferences held between 1946 and 1949 in Britain, Switzerland and Holland; the latter is the production of a Baptist minister as a result of study-groups in his own church, delivered as a series of lectures to an international group in Switzerland. Their interest, particularly for readers in India, is in the way in which they indicate very clearly the trend of theological thinking in the West on the connected subjects of Bible and Church, the former volume on a somewhat more 'academic' level, the latter on a more 'popular', but no less profound, level.

It is impossible in less than an extended essay to review a symposium of this type in detail, but various general observations are needed, and the articles which more particularly deal with Indian problems may be considered more fully. The first part of the volume outlines 'Fundamental Considerations' on the question of Biblical Authority, from the point of view of seven scholars of different denominations; the second part is an extremely able survey by Dr. Wolfgang Schweitzer of the present position in the study of Biblical Theology and Ethics; the third part contains five essays on 'Principles of Interpretation' and a concluding section incorporating a set of 'Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible' which were accepted after much discussion by a group of scholars of different traditions and nations, brought together in 1949; the fourth part consists of six essays on specific applications of Biblical authority to such questions as 'Church and State', 'Property', and 'Nation and Race'. Since the avowed aim of the book is to set out the way in which the Church as a whole might be able to give an agreed answer to the social and ethical problems of the day, it might be expected that the last section of the book would be the most interesting and important, yet the present reviewer found that, on the contrary, the first section reached a level which was not fully maintained, and the last section as a whole was somewhat disappointing.

The most interesting feature of the first section was that it was quite impossible to discover from the matter the denominational allegiance of five of the seven contributors. The Orthodox representative was quite uncompromising in his orthodoxy, whilst the Anglican tried his best to prove that one particular section of that conglomeration of thought was 'the Anglican position', but any of the others might have changed their labels without any more than a slight modification of their positions. This does not mean that there was complete agreement, or that the various essays did not show differences of thought and approach, but those differences were not by any means denominational. This phenomenon was repeated throughout the book, and leads one to realize further that the theological approach of the whole volume was remarkably self-consistent. It is probably inevitable that those who are interested in a particular line of thought should appear like-minded, and that those who would not be 'at home' in a World Council study-group would not attend. There is in this a double potentiality, on the one hand of a truly 'Ecumenical' theology developing, which can supersede divisions, or on the other, of a 'World Council Theology' which will only exacerbate them. This symposium shows distinct signs of the more optimistic development, and there is certainly no sign of any attempt to exclude differences which remain. Some who are a little doubtful about the soundness of the World Council's approach will

probably be agreeably surprised to find it much nearer to their own ideas than they had thought. The emphasis throughout is on the Bible as a whole, containing the record of God's revelation to Man, which culminates in, and receives its meaning from, the central act of the Incarnation. The most significant of the 'guiding principles' laid down is that the interpretation of any specific passage can only be approached in the light of its context in the Bible as a whole.

This principle has been well worked-out in the so-called 'Baptist Contribution' to the first section from the pen of Dr. V. E. Devadutt. The essay is rather a study of Biblical Authority as it concerns Christians in a predominantly non-Christian environment, and therefore is the most relevant chapter in the book for Indian readers of any denomination. The masterly analysis of the difference between the Hindu and Christian standpoints concludes by saying that the Hindu relies primarily on man's 'intuitive insights into the nature of Reality', whereas to the Christian the foundations of his theology are in 'the self-disclosing activity of God' of which the Bible is a record. It is this fundamental difference which affects the attitude of each to the Bible. To the Hindu there is no difficulty in placing the New Testament, at least, by the side of the Vedas and respecting each equally. Even some Christians are led astray into the idea of substituting some part of the Hindu Scriptures for the Old Testament, but a true understanding of the nature of Revelation and Biblical authority makes this impossible, for the revelation of God's personal activity is the subject of the whole Bible, and the whole is necessary to understand the meaning of any part. Dr. Devadutt makes a further important point in his emphasis that the Christian ethic is dependent on the Christian revelation, and any attempt to set it up as a separable ideal is impossible. The whole essay breathes a refreshing and challenging call to present the Christian gospel to the non-Christian in its fullness, without any attempt to minimize the real values of Hinduism. It is also an object-lesson to theologians in India on the importance of really knowing something about Hinduism whilst trying to preach the Christian faith.

A sentence towards the end of Dr. Devadutt's essay leads on directly to Dr. Champion's book on the New Testament Church. He says 'The ethos of a fellowship like the Church is based on personal relationship of a more or less intimate character', and whilst this particular statement may not occur elsewhere in the symposium, it is implied through a great deal of it. It might also be the text for Dr. Champion, whose study of the Church is taken largely from this angle. In some ways Dr. Champion's style is deceptively simple, and the reader may overlook the fundamental points which he is making. The fact that the book is not overtly 'doctrinal' does not mean that Dr. Champion is not concerned with doctrine; he is rather approaching doctrine from an unusual angle. He himself says (p. 76) 'our attention can be concentrated on the apostolic preaching, upon the formation of Christian communities, upon the organization of offices within the communities . . . but we must not miss the more fundamental truth that all this growth and the methods by which it was achieved are just witnesses to the reality of that spiritual life which was not consciously concerned with methods and plans but . . . had to go on by the necessity of its own nature, reproducing itself'. He emphasizes that the basis of

the Church was a new personal relationship, vertical and horizontal, in that men entered into relationship with God as Father, and as a corollary, with one another as brethren. Dr Champion was not one of the group which produced the symposium, and he cannot have read it before he produced his book, but he gives a very remarkable model for any minister or leader to follow if he wants to present the essence of a somewhat technical theological work in a way which will be acceptable to non-technical minds. Perhaps the best advice is that the minister should himself read the symposium, and expound Dr. Champion to his people; the central theme of the latter need not be beyond a village audience, whilst at the same time it demands study from those in particular who are trying to lead the Church in India into realizing its own true basis and its place in the *Una Sancta*.

D. F. HUDSON.

Christianity Explained to Muslims, L. Bevan Jones. Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 5 Russell Street, Calcutta 16. Price Rs.4.

This book was originally published in 1937 and we now have a Second Edition, with many revisions, chiefly in Chapters II and VI. The author explains the purpose of the book thus: 'The primary purpose of this book is to help the Christian evangelist to examine dispassionately certain outstanding difficulties which the Muslim people experience in regard to the Christian faith, and, at the same time, so to restate the truths involved as to leave at least no reasonable ground for misunderstanding' (Page 1). The author achieves remarkable success in this. He explains successively in simple, clear and unambiguous language the Moslem difficulties with regard to the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures, their character which differs from what he considers is revealed literature, the Person of Christ, the Holy Trinity, the Work of Christ with all that is implied in that work, etc. These difficulties are not merely the difficulties of individual Moslems. They represent, as it were, Islam's critique of Christianity. The author not only states these difficulties but suggests definite lines of approach to the Moslem to make him understand the central doctrines of the Christian faith. The most difficult of problems for the Christian evangelist is always that of 'communication'. In order that he may succeed in some measure in making the Gospel intelligible and relevant to his hearers, he must have sympathetic appreciation of the mind of his hearers.

This book of Mr. Bevan Jones is the result of his experience first as an evangelistic Missionary among Moslems in East Bengal for over twenty years and later as a teacher in the Henry Martyn School of Islamic Studies, when it was in Lahore. The treatment of the subjects in the book therefore bears the impress of one who struggled with the practical problems of an evangelist. This is an invaluable guide to those engaged in work among the Moslems. It should also be read by every lay Christian living in a Moslem environment. It is to be hoped that the book will be translated into Indian languages, especially Bengali and Urdu.

V. E. D.

*Issues underlying Third World Conference on Faith and Order discussed
in 'The Ecumenical Review'*

By way of preparation for the Third World Conference on Faith and Order, which was held at Lund, Sweden, from August 15-29, a series of articles on problems of church unity appears in the April 1952 issue of the quarterly *Ecumenical Review* published by the World Council of Churches, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva.

The issue opens with a message from the Chairman of Faith and Order, the Most Rev. Yngve Brilioth, Archbishop of Upsala. An Editorial points out: 'The vocation of Faith and Order is to remind the Churches that "*co-operation is not enough*" and stresses the need for "a unity which is demanded alike by the Church's worship of God and by her mission to the world".'

In 'Issues on the Church' the Rev Fr. A. G. Hebert, of the (Anglican) Society of the Sacred Mission, considers the Faith and Order report on the Church prepared for the conference in the light of the challenge to Christians which disunity presents. Bishop Wilhelm Staehlin, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oldenburg, Germany, offers 'Insights and Open Questions concerning Ways of Worship', while Dr. Perry Epler Gresham, Minister (Disciples of Christ) in Detroit, contributes 'Issues in Inter-Communion'. Professor Jacques Ellul (French Reformed Church) analyses the bearing on Church division of psychological, historical and administrative conservatism among church people, as well as of the political situation.

Writing on 'Disunities Created by Differing Patterns of Church Life', the Rev. G. R. Cragg, of Montreal, instances social status, varying attitudes towards what is regarded as permissible behaviour, and church worship in North American church life. The Rev. Oliver Tomkins, Secretary of the Faith and Order Commission, recalls the significance of the document 'The Church, the Churches and the Council', and surveys the whole ecumenical scene, including those Christian bodies who are within the World Council and those who are without. 'Beyond our sight there is unity still, for Christ is not divided and cannot be destroyed.'

The reports of the three theological sub-commissions, 'The Church', 'Ways of Worship' and 'Intercommunion', and longer theological publications on these and similar topics from different countries are discussed in book reviews by various contributors.

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