

Growing Interest in Religious Literature

WHETHER it is because of the global wars or the political revolutions which have attended them or the economic turmoil which has been their consequence, the interest of great numbers of ordinary people in religious literature is growing. Each year the list of books in this category increases. The variety also expands. And the books likewise grow in their literary character, in the quality of their development, in their power of logic, in the magic of their attraction. If there be doubt of this progress, it may be corrected by checking the publishers' catalogues of 1946 with those of 10 or 20 or 30 years ago.

Undoubtedly, the most impressive religious volume of the 12 months now closing is "The Idea of Christ in the Gospels," by George Santayana, famous philosopher and poet. He considers what the Saviour was in His roles as the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the performer of miracles, the preacher, the martyr; then discusses what He did that still is durable and dynamic. The inspirational nature of the gospels engages his attention and he asks, "What exactly is this inspiration?" Much of the remainder of the work is a striving to answer. The path of the author leads through a mystic realm. It is not a road without hills and stones and briars. And it does not lead to a universe saved and converted. But the journey is well worth while.

Mr. Santayana was "a decided materialist" and perhaps even a cynic in his youth. Now, past 80, he still is something of a sceptic. Yet he does believe, and Christ is at least as real to him as mathematics.

Summarizing a Voluminous Literature

Among other noteworthy titles issued since January 1 last, the following merit mention:

Dr. William Adams Brown in "Toward a United Church" has produced a book in which three generations of the ecumenical idea at work are brought into focus. He explains at the start of his discussion that he means to summarize "a voluminous lit-

erature," but he does more than that—creating, in effect, a skilled lawyer's case against the continued separation of religious bodies which obviously suffer from being separated. His philosophy is practical as well as richly idealistic. If a reader is to study only one work on Christian unity, here it is.

"Pioneers for Peace Through Religion," by Dr. Charles S. Macfarland, is a book of similar interest—a history of the Church Peace Union, founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1914. The effort of the establishment did not prevent the Second World War, but there can be no question about the value of its contribution to the moral opposition to international strife. It has asserted and repeatedly reasserted "divine sovereignty" versus the provocative implications of "national sovereignty" at their worst.

The Role of the Bible in a War-Torn World

Dr. Francis Carr Stifter's "The Bible Speaks" is an engaging attempt to show that "the world's greatest book" is "playing its important role in the reconstruction of a war-blasted world." It certainly succeeds in proving that the Scriptures do bring strength to "every wholesome influence in human life." If only because the Bible gives people "courage for our need," it is an invaluable asset in the present era of readjustment and rebuilding—as the author of this volume says.

"They Knew Christ," by Rev. F. J. Mueller, is a series of sixteen portraits of men and women who were associated with the Saviour—the dramatic personae of the New Testament, including Luke, John, Mark, Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, St. Stephen, the Rich Young Man, the Blind Beggar, the Centurion Cornelius, Pilate, Herod, Martha, Mary Magdalene, St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph. Each character is viewed through modern glasses, naturally, but none is separated from the original background of the Bible; the language, the style and manner of treatment are scriptural throughout.

Another endeavor to rearrange and reinterpret the Holy Word

By James Waldo Fawcett



GEORGE SANTAYANA
Author of "The Idea of Christ in the Gospels."

for modern use is "A Bible for the Liberal," edited by Dr. Dagobert D. Runes. He speaks of his purpose as being to strip "essential Judaism and essential Christianity" of "the wrappings of circumstance of time and place," so that the ethical values are revealed and stressed. Naturally, the "writings" of Jesus are the most important and are reproduced most copiously.

Dr. Lawrence E. Nelson's "Our Roving Bible" traces the influence of the Scriptures through English and American literature from 597 A.D. to date. The editor is also a vigorous commentator, whose knowledge of history aids him immensely in his work. As an anthology, if not for any other reason, here is a volume which surely has come to stay.

A New Survey of Christian History

A like observation applies to "The Story of the Faith," a scholarly "survey of Christian history for the undogmatic," by Dr. William Alva Gifford. It is

not easy reading, but as a reference text it will be helpful both in institutions of higher learning and among independent clergy and lay students.

The most recent Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, intended for "Christian readers who insist on God's truth as He revealed it," may seem "different" to people familiar with older editions, but the changes made by 31 of "the foremost biblical scholars and teachers of our time" were not decided upon adventurously. Accuracy was their objective, and they frankly have achieved it in "the language of today."

A companion book is "Marching Orders for a New Day," a collection of 70 "passages" from the Bible chosen by chaplains, pastors and men and women of the armed forces for "the most challenging of times." The opening page appropriately begins with: "Let not your heart be troubled"—the instruction of Jesus to His disciples on the evening before the crucifixion.

"Meditations on the Ten Commandments," by Herbert V. Prochnow, are thoughtful essays brought together by an editor who calls for "a rededication of all men to the fundamentals" of religion. Brotherhood and fellowship in obedience to Divine Will are emphasized in the comment.

Daily Devotions for The Entire Year

Three hundred and seventy clergymen contributed to "America Prays," a book of daily devotions for the entire year, edited by Dr. Norman E. Nygaard for the use of lay as well as clerical readers in quest of varied and yet corporate inspiration. The purpose of the volume is well served by its attractive arrangement, a page for a day.

Another group enterprise is "Together," compiled by Dr. Glenn Clark, in which are assembled a dozen "urgent, timely messages" by Dr. E. Stanley Jones, Dr. Samuel M. Shoemaker, Dr. John G. Magee, Representative Walter Judd, Howard Thurman, Abraham Vereide and others—all advocates of "a universal

consecration" in behalf of the kingdom in this world.

The international co-operative movement is the theme of "United for Freedom," edited by Leo R. Ward. Material from Pope Pius XI, George A. McDonald, S. J.; Andrew J. Kress, Emerson Hynes, etc., is brought in to a systematic relation with special reference to practical ethics and sociology.

A study of the clashing interests of the church and the totalitarian state is Dr. Paul Hutchinson's "New Leviathan." Obviously, the Soviet Union comes in for condemnation as the sponsor of "a mortal god" with whom the author declares "there can be no compromise."

"Christ and Man's Dilemma," by Dr. George A. Buttrick, "pleads for the real Christ—not for Christ as a vague ideal, for that would be no match for our selfishness; not for Christ as a name for our good intentions, for they are less than straws in our modern tempest; but for Christ as the Incarnate God" as an alternative to chaos.

Opposite theologies are represented in "The Trinity and Christian Devotion," by Dr. Charles W. Lowry, rector of All Saints' Church, and "The Faith of an Unrepentant Liberal," by the Rev. A. Powell Davies, minister of All Souls' Church, yet both authors labor in the same community, seek the same ultimate religious fulfillment, share the same hope, are prompted by the same basic conviction. A rich spiritual experience might be had by any receptive reader who would study the Trinitarian and the Unitarian points of view together, consciously striving to find and to correlate the elemental values in both.

Five books of frankly individualistic origin are: "And Another Thing," by Howard Spring; "The Abrupt Self," David Martens; "Beyond This Darkness," Roger L. Shinn; "It Shall Be Done Unto You," Lucius Humphrey, and "What's Wrong With Religion?" by Karl B. Justus.

Christmas Gift Books Worthy of Good Friends



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

By Edgar J. Goodspeed
A simple, reasonable and yet powerfully absorbing volume by a man of international renown among scholars and religious students. \$2.50

THE WAY

By E. Stanley Jones
Treated in steps, this book is valuable for use as daily devotions and by study groups . . . on how to find and follow the Christian Way. \$1.00

ON BEING FIT TO LIVE WITH

By E. Stanley Jones
Here are 25 of Dr. Fosdick's heart-warming messages dealing with the personal and social problems of postwar living. \$2.00

CHRIST AND THE FINE ARTS

By Cynthia Pearl Maus
A unique and inspiring volume of the world's best art and literature pertaining to the Life of Christ. \$4.35

THE HERDSMAN

By Dorothy Clarke Wilson
A moving novel of Amos, son of Elkanah. A fine portrait of a Godly man and of the world in which he lived. \$3.00

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