Book Reviews

History of American Congregationalism, by Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L. Fagley. Boston, The Pilgrim Press. 432 pages. $2.00

Although many books have been written about the beginning of Congregationalism in England, and its subsequent growth in America, after being transplanted to New England, this book has been written to emphasize the important developments in American Congregationalism in the last fifty years, as a result of its history.

The authors fulfil their purpose in a commendable way. Both of the writers are evidently well versed in Congregational history and polity. Starting with the religious situation in England at the end of the Tudor Period and continuing to about 1942, the book recounts most important events in Congregationalism in an instructive and readable fashion.

Well known to many people are the experiences of the Pilgrims: first, in Scrooby, England; then in Leyden, Holland; and finally, in the Plymouth colony. Also well known are the incidents connected with Governor John Winthrop and the Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Not so well known are the experiences of the Plumber's Hall Society and Richard Fitz in England; of the Norwich Church gathered under the leadership of Robert Browne and termed "the first *regularly constituted* Congregational church on English soil" (p. 33); and of the Martin Mar-Prelate Affair. All these events together with the other important ones in the denomination's history are related and carefully supported through the use of footnotes.

Not only is the beginning and extension of Congregationalism retold, but also fully explained in detail are such things as the formation of the denominational councils; the founding of Congregational Colleges and seminaries; the proposals for union with other denominations; the ministry in Congregationalism; and, in the last chapter, a resume of Congregationalism as an adventure in religious liberty. It is evident from a perusal of the contents of the book that it is quite exhaustive and inclusive.

The formation of committees, councils, and associations within Congregationalism and the limits of the control of each group have been vaguely understood by many people, even by those who belong to the denomination. The chapters titled "The Council: Its Formations and Changes In Its Structure" and "The Council and The Boards" are of great help in understanding just how much cooperation is possible between individual churches that are so loosely knit together. "The churches were facing the great problem which is inherent in the very nature of democracy: how to maintain individual independence and still have sufficient cooperation to accomplish results in common enterprises." pg. 201.

The authors have been very objective in their presentation of all the facts and in their interpretation of them. While inclined to emphasize the valuable achievements of their own denomination, they have done so in a limited and conservative manner.

Due to the authorship by two persons there is some repetition in the book. However, as is stated in the foreword, this has been kept at a minimum. The collaboration of the two authors has resulted in an excellent presentation of American Congregationalism. At the end of the book, there are included the copies of some very important statements of faith that have been written by Congregationalists throughout the denomination's history. This supplement, together with a very complete bibliography of books that have been written

about Congregationalism, adds greatly to the value of this book under review.

To anyone who is a member of the Congregational-Christian Church or interested in it and its background or interested in the religious life of colonial New England, the careful reading of this book will be rewarding and instructive.

HARVEY L. PIERCE

The Russian Idea, by Nicholas Berdyaev. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948. 255 pages. $3.00.

Berdyaev purposely avoids a merely empirical portrayal of Russian history in this volume. Such a history, he admits, would prove repulsive since it would be filled with many sordid details. Instead, however, his main burden is: first, to arrive at some answer to the question, "what was the thought of the Creator about Russia," and, second, "to arrive at a picture of the Russian people which can be grasped by the mind, to arrive at the 'idea' of it."

Berdyaev prepares the reader for the number of apparent contradictions in the Russian Idea by indicating the high degree of polarization in the Russian people. For example, there is the element of humility and self-denial, while at the same time there is revolt caused by demanding justice. Again, the Russians are compassionate, yet capable of gross cruelty. He summarizes these paradoxes by saying, "One can be charmed by them, one can be disillusioned. The unexpected is always to be expected from them."

After a brief historical introduction, the author develops his theme by selecting nineteenth century thinkers and writers as illustrations of the Russian Idea. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Bakunin, Hertzen, and others are carefully and skillfully analyzed. Drawing from these pen portraits, Berdyaev weaves the following threads into the tapestry of the Russian Idea: The Russian people are religious in their very make-up, for religious unrest characterizes even the unbelievers. Closely allied to this religious spirit is a strong emphasis upon eschatology. This element, combined with the fact that the people are wedded to their soil, leads the Russian to feel that somehow the "new Jerusalem" is to be connected with the vast Russian land. Finally, this Russian spirit of religion bears a unique communal character. Berdyaev admits that Russians are less socialized than Western peoples, but, he insists, they are infinitely more community conscious, more ready for the life in common. In this regard, the author notes that the coming of the "new Jerusalem" depends upon this spirit of community and brotherhood, and, with prophet's voice, he concludes the volume with the statement that the way is being prepared in Russia for a new revelation about society which will usher in the era of the Holy Spirit or the coming of the "new Jerusalem."

This reviewer admittedly knows little or nothing about the Russian mind; hence, a critique of Berdyaev's analysis would be mere presumption. A criticism might well be aimed by some readers, however, at his partial endorsement of the Russian eschatology which will probably be considered much too limited, too earth-bound, and too nationalistic for most evangelical Christians, not to mention the fact that it is a guarded endorsement of some type of communism as the Christian ideal. Although Berdyaev has been more highly esteemed by non-Russians than by his own countrymen, his *Russian Idea* is one of the more serious attempts to make clear to the West the true Russia, her Church, and the soul of her people. To anyone interested in bettering his understanding in this respect, the book is worthy of careful reading.

PAUL F. ABEL

How the Church Grows, by Roy A. Burkhart, New York: Harper and Brothers. 200 pp. $2.00.

This book is based upon the premise that the church is increasingly irrelevant in our secular world. If it is to fulfill its mission in the earth, it must be reborn. If this can be evolved, the course of American history may be radically changed. "If all the half loyalty and the secret discipleship and

the lukeworm fealty that are accorded to God were suddenly to flame into fiery, zealous devotion, this generation would save an imperiled civilization." This would mean a social salvation founded on hearts cleansed and motivated by divine love.

It is probably true that every true shepherd of God's people during the past two thousand years has earnestly striven to "stir the flame into fiery, zealous devotion." Apparently, they haven't been too successful. Dr. Burkhart undertakes to tell us how it may be done. Among his many suggestions, the following are typical.

1. There is need for new preaching. An analysis is made of the message of present day preaching. Some sermons center in the Scriptures; others are experience-centered. Some emphasize faith, others works; some are personal, others social. In conservative circles, there is much preaching on atonement, the second coming of Christ and heaven and hell.

The seminaries are responsible in large measure for the present inadequate role of the church, for they major on training men to preach while they give little or no preparation for leading people to a vital faith and giving them the passion to live by it. The results of this are seen in some very disheartening statistics (quoted from another author). Only about five percent of the membership of the contempory protestant churches is truly sincere, while perhaps another five percent participate regularly in the life of the church.

2. It demands new leadership. The true church ever seeks practical goals. Therefore, an adequate professional staff is required to furnish specialized leadership for the many activities beyond preaching and pastoral work, including music, religious education, psycho-therapy and vocational guidance. These leaders must be recruited and trained at no little cost.

3. The key to success is the United Church. Local churches must be combined and denominations must merge. To realize the True Church, vast resources will be needed to support and carry out its enormously enlarged functions. But the world economic and political issues demand this United Church with its multiform program. This church will send out skilled leadership to heal the body, to illumine the mind, to guide the growth of the spirit, to re-build the community, to direct proper health, to distribute food, to revise and organize the use of our natural resources, to aid education, to strengthen the home and to renew the church.

The author obviously envisions a super-institution which will take over and run our world. One will look far to find a more comprehensive program for the church advocated by churchmen, with the possible exception of some of the claims of the medieval popes.

WILDER R. REYNOLDS

Religion's Place in General Education, by Nevin C. Harner, Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1949. 167 pp. $2.50.

The author is Professor of Christian Education in the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in the United States. He is also vice-chairman of the International Council of Religious Education.

This new book includes four lectures given by Dr. Harner at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas and includes as an appendix a voluminous report of a committee of the American Council on Education on "The Relation of Religion to Public Education."

The four lectures are entitled, "Religion and Education— Indivisible"; "The Place of Religion in General Education"; "An Evaluation of Christian Current Proposals"; "The Distinctive Educational Task of the Church."

Dr. Harner maintains in this work that basically education and religion are one and the same thing. He says that it is only when a supernaturalism with its doctrine of total depravity makes religion otherworldly, on the one hand, or a thoroughgoing humanism too secular, on the other, that education ceases to be religious. The religion of the churches and the secular world of science should find common ground, says the author.

Discussing secularization of education he names the various proposed solutions to the problem of a religiously illiterate populace. The parochial school; week-day school; teaching of religion as a social phenomenon; the teaching of democracy, are all inadequate measures. Religion should be taught as it relates to all fields of study in the cultural heritage. It remains for the church to teach the Christian heritage, including the Bible, church history, Christian doctrine, liturgy, and to draw out religion's deeper personal and ethical meanings.

The Appendix of 78 pages is a reprint of a Committee Report of the American Council on Education published in 1946. This report discusses the impact of secularism on religion and life. Religion is defined as the giving of supreme allegiance to ultimate reality. Attention is given to the matter of a core curriculum in religion for general education; the secularistic definition of "Spiritual Values"; education that negates religion; the diversity of existing policies and practices with respect to religion and education; the separation of church and state; week-day religious education; what should and may be done in public schools; religion at the college and teacher level; the school the church and the home; the spiritual replenishment of modern culture.

Teaching is not only developing ability to think but presenting a cultural heritage about which to think. The student cannot be brought into full possession of his cultural heritage without the inclusion of religion as an element in that heritage, says the report.

However, to reduce religious beliefs to a common denominator for a core curriculum in general education is out of the question. There must be a distinction made between teaching and indoctrination. Religious leaders must have a meeting of minds before the schools can take any steps, for religion is to be taught without indoctrination.

Higher education must deal with the paradox of religious activity on the campus while science and philosophy are establishing mind-sets which are average to religion in all its forms.

These lectures and the report of the committee reflect concern about the impact of secularism upon the life of our people.

It appears to this reviewer to be regrettable indeed that a definition of religion should be proposed in dealing with the solution of the problem of secularism which takes religion directly into the ill it seeks to cure. If, in order for education and religion to be identical there must be mediation between naturalism and supernaturalism the ground is yielded to naturalism. The remedy takes on the disease.

If man is by nature as much inclined toward God as he is toward sin and evil so great an emphasis upon the reality of God as supernaturalism imposes should swing the nature of mankind Godward, it would seem. If man by nature is so poised between Heaven and hell a neutral environment would keep him indecisive forever.

The educational philosophy of the book is largely a reflection of the philosophy of the International Council of Religious Education as given in Vieth's *The Church and Christian Education* and Bower and Hayward's *Protestantism Faces Its Educational Task Together.*

HAROLD C. MASON

Humanism As A Philosophy, by Corliss Lamont. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949. 368 pages. $3.75.

This volume has the modest purpose of establishing *naturalistic* Humanism as the one accurate, appealing and universal rallying point for men of intelligence and good will to be found in the modern world. Here are conclusions "grounded on solid scientific fact". (p. 145) Here is a philosophy which offers itself as the flowering achievement of modern science and reason.

Professor Lamont brushes aside the Academic Humanism of Babbitt and More; the Catholic or Integral Humanism of Aquinas and Maritain; the sub-

jective variety of F. C. S. Schiller; the Religious Humanism of Dietrich, Reese, Wilson and Potter; and ignores completely the Evangelical Humanism of Lynn Harold Hough. The author is intent on one thing: a world-view in which Nature is everything, in which there is no supernatural and in which man is an integral part of nature and not separated from it by any sharp cleavage or discontinuity.

Thus our cosmos lacks a supernatural and eternal God and men are without supernatural and immortal souls. Nature itself constitutes the sum total of reality. Matter rather than mind is made the foundation-stuff of the universe. Theism degrades the intellect and implies an unacceptable curtailment of novelty in the world. Forced to admit, however, that men are compelled to assume *something self-existent,* Lamont makes his "faith choice" on the side of Eternal Matter - - - "self-existent, self-active, self-developing, self-enduring."

With Matter thus deified it becomes no trick at all for the *naturalistic* Humanist to decry supernatural religion as the "brain-spun creation of the human imagination" teaching a cosmology of conceit and a superstitious anthropomorphism which illegitimately projects the importance of human values from this planet to existence as a whole. Belief in a personal future life is placed under special attack as almost the only *pragmatic* value of the supernatural left to modern religion. If this is true then Dr. Lamont is correct in assuming that for his purposes "we can take no more important step than to discard the illusion of immortality."

As a result, man stands alone in a universe that does not care. But even this fact means that men should face life buoyantly and bravely. Nature and nature appreciation become a therapeutic substitute for God. The "ever present glory of visible nature" takes the place of the traditional glory of the supernatural on a basis said to be "a fair exchange, and more."

With all ethical laws and systems declared to be relative, the "regulative principle" of morality is found in a devotion to the "social good." The chief end of thought and action is the happiness and glory of man. With "service to humanity" as the watchword, organized society can look forward with confidence to a sustained pattern of happiness under the guidance of sovereign reason.

Christian thinkers can benefit from this volume in many ways. It offers an excellent resume of the philosophic, religious and cultural roots of secularism. It will enhance every christian's sense of responsibility and need for a vital witness in our world of today. It should bring to a sharper focus the deep cleavage which exists between the Gospel and the natural man.

We agree with the author that stupidity is as great a sin as selfishness; and "the moral obligation to be intelligent" ranks always among the highest of duties. For this very reason the author should be less subjective or naive in assuming all gaps in scientific knowledge as merely "temporary ignorance" which makes it possible for a given scientific hypothesis to be treated as if it were an established fact. The truth that biologists have not yet discovered precisely how organic forms evolved from inanimate matter is not quite the "little thing" Lamont casually makes it out to be. Moreover, the problem of evil is not profoundly solved by the mere declaration that evil is non-existent, or, at best, a man-made something which can be man-solved. It seems to the reviewer that this grandson of a Methodist minister is much indebted to the Christian Gospel, which he is seeking so earnestly to destroy, for noble aspirations and an optimism which is otherwise unwarranted, than appears on the surface.

Chilton C. McPheeters

The Philosophy of Existence, by Gabriel Marcel. New York: The Philosophical Library, 1949. 96 pages. $2.75.

The recent appearance of volumes on Existentialism, both by Existentialists and by their critics, has given the reviewers the choice of trying to read and understand the

primary sources themselves, or of reading the interpretations of others who have done so. Under review here is one of the volumes by a recognized exponent of the Cafe movement in philosophy. He is the son of a former French Minister to Sweden, a non-practising Catholic who shared the conventional nineteenth-century French agnosticism. In his youth, an aunt who had become a protestant exerted a profound influence upon his thought, as did also the sudden death of his mother.

Marcel grew up in revolt against the hypocrisy of the France of his youth, and against what seemed to him a sterile educational system. His thought pattern became one of polarity; even those who sought to surround him with every care increased his feeling of inner tension. Out of this pattern of experience, he sought to develop a metaphysics.

The volume consists of three parts, the first entitled "On the Ontological Mystery" being an exposition of the metaphysic of despair which the author believes to be the beginning of all wisdom. To him, despair consists in the recognition of the inadequacy of technics, the futility of hoping in ourselves, and the abortive tendency of all forms of self-activism. The second part, "Existence and Human Freedom" is an exposition of the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, with something of a criticism of Sartre's ontology. The third part, "Testimony and Existentialism" is, according to Marcel himself, a definition of "the 'existentialist' doctrine which I personally hold."

It is not easy to get a clear conception of the meaning of such a writer as Marcel. This is due in part to the fact that he is a defeatist philosopher, whose philosophy is a generalization of his personal frustrations, plus a criticism of the culture in which he was reared. One would get the impression from this work that *all* men grew up in a sterile environment, surrounded by hypocrisy, and under circumstances which could not possibly leave any meaning to human life. At times, Marcel recognizes that he is unfair to those who sought to make his early life pleasant. At the same time, he distils from this very experience the conclusion that "to think, to formulate and to judge is always to betray."

More serious still, Marcel in his preachment concerning freedom would liberate man from religion, from morality, and finally from objective truth, and leave him a floating chip on the chaos of what was once thought to be an orderly universe. Those of us who believe that we still perceive order in the cosmos, and objective truth in religion and morality, can scarcely escape the feeling that this Philosophy of Nothingness has spent too much time in the Latin Quarter. Just as the liberalism of a generation ago hypostatized its optimism until it had only a bland and genial universe, so today the philosophy of despair makes the frustrations of a selected group of individuals the touchstone for all philosophy. Neither Concord nor the Montmartre can tell us all about human life!

The American reader will find it difficult to follow Marcel in his constant intrusion of drama into philosophy. It is true that life presents crises and conflicts; but must these always be tragic? May there not be mistaken identities, as well as hopeless inconsistencies and paradoxes? And ought not philosophy seek to render these contractions consistent, rather than leave itself at the tender mercies of the elements of Nothingness?

A certain amount of criticism of life is wholesome. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxon world has subjected itself to too little of this. But it is strange medical practice which can do no more than diagnose. Marcel does not seem to have any method for rescuing man from the blankness which he finds life to be. Here he keeps close company with Sartre. Both seem to illustrate the futility of philosophy divorced from religion.

HAROLD B. KUHN

A Short History of Existentialism, by Jean Wahl. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949. 58 pp. $2.75.

The philosophy of existence, currently in vogue in France under the unof-

fical guidance of Jean-Paul Sartre, grows out of the feeling that there is evident in human affairs a process of self-destruction. American readers find it difficult to think in terms of the general futility which has seized the younger generation of Europe, not only those in the conquered lands but also those in the nations nominally victorious. Thus some are tempted to pass over the French Existentialism as ephemeral and insignificant. This is without doubt a too-easy dismissal of the philosophers of the French cafes; after all, university students of America do not grow beards during their summer's travel in Europe to look like people of no consequence.

Wahl has attempted to trace the broad Existentialist movement from its beginning with Kierkegaard, its elaboration by Jaspers and Heidegger, and its translation into the terms of the anguish of the younger French thinkers by Sartre. In Kierkegaard, the opposition between existence and essence appears to be secondary to the polarities felt within the experience of the existent individual. The four characteristics of the existent are well-known: his infinite relationship with himself, his self-consciousness of becoming, his quality of passionate thought, and his passion of freedom. It is this subjective individual who attains the high ground of affirmation of relation to the Wholly Other in the scandalization of reason. But even in his treatment of these paradoxes, Kierkegaard seeks to bring existence and transcendence toether. Wahl's thesis at this point is, that Kierkegaard is nearer to those whom he opposed than might be expected. His contribution to the philosophy of existence was not that he was an absolute pioneer, but that he gave form to certain aspects in the work of Schelling, Kant and Hegel.

In the work of Jaspers and Heidegger, Wahl sees both the secularization and the unfolding of Kierkegaard's thought. In the unfolding, Heidegger attacks the major issue, that of the problem of Being. Through his conception of *anguish,* he reaches the conclusion that we exist without any apparent reason for our existence; we sense our *Geworfenheit,* an existence without essence. This conclusion grows, for Heidegger, out of his atheism - - though as Wahl points out, he utilizes expressions which reflect the religious ideas with which he grew up, signifying that "some of the essential notions in his philosophy arise from a certain level of thought which he believed he had passed beyond." (p. 25) In him, the ideas of Nietzsche and the feelings of Kierkegaard are continually in combat.

Wahl avoids the tendency to see Sartre simply within the context of Heidegger's thought. While the former is deeply indebted to the latter, he also owes much to Husserl and Marcel. The manner in which Sartre bifurcates Being seems to Wahl to lay the foundation for something of an ontological leap, by which he concedes to the ontological need, through the massive "in-itself" that which the "for-itself" would logically preclude. The author finds Sartre an idealist; above the world of the problematical, with its inevitable failures and frustrations, stands the world of the functional "in-itself" to which consciousness opposes itself as a Nothingness.

The final section of the volume is devoted to a series of criticisms and rebuttals by Berdyaev, Gandillac, Gurvich, Koyre, Marcel and Levinas. These deal largely with the relationship existing between the system of Heidegger and Sartre. Some of these critics seem to contribute little to the general purpose of the volume, namely that of acquainting the reader with the contemporary revolt against the philosophy of essence.

HAROLD B. KUHN