

THEORIES OF PRIMITIVE RELIGION, by E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 132, 25s.*

This book can be strongly recommended to anybody who wants a lucid and thorough account of what anthropologists have said on the origin and function of religion. Such a reader may feel disappointed that in fact very little of lasting value seems to have emerged from this tangled tale of speculation. With concision and wit Professor Evans-Pritchard guides through the theories, which particularly between 1870 and 1914, claimed to explain the origin of religion by mistaken reasoning, emotional experiences or social consciousness and indicates their logical flaws, their inadequate documentation, and their uselessness for empirical research. Elements of value are given generous recognition; Durkheim's sociological thesis while 'a just-so story' is 'brilliant and imaginative, almost poetical; and he had an insight into a psychological fundamental of religion; the elimination of the self . . . its having no meaning, or even existence seen as part of something greater and other'. Particularly full treatment is granted to Levy-Bruhl and Pareto, partly because of the misinterpretation they have suffered and partly because they studied a favourite topic of Evans-Pritchard's, the relation between empirical knowledge and non-empirical beliefs. However the fair-mindedness of the survey strengthens the author's claim that this mass of theorising is now of interest merely as reflecting the crisis of faith of the later nineteenth century.

In a concluding chapter the author considers the prospects for modern social anthropology, with its aim of establishing valid correlations between particular institutions, in the forming of a genuine sociology of religion, here the guiding principle must be 'Religion is what religion does'. Studies of comparative religion, based on texts and sacred books are of little interest to the anthropologist, since they give us limited insight into the thought and action of ordinary people, and it is ordinary people the

anthropologist is chiefly interested in. Some recent studies by Lienhardt, Middleton, and Turner of the British school and by Tempels and Theuvs in the Congo are referred to as examples of what can and should be done in this line.

It would be extremely difficult to write a better book within the scope and length of this one; yet perhaps one may open a door which Evans-Pritchard leaves tantalisingly ajar, when he notes how we all to some extent take up Marrett's distinction between religion viewed by theology and by social anthropology. To what extent is the 'religion' of theology the same as the 'religion' of social anthropology? The challenge is dodged by the humanist for whom social anthropology must be completely adequate to explain Christianity and by the Bonhoefferian theologian for whom Christianity is not a religion; for the Catholic it seems necessary to say that his faith is both the unique act of divine self-revelation and a religion in a considerable degree understandable by comparison with paganism. This may seem trite; in fact it is extremely relevant to a great many questions. Is not the contemporary quest for a 'religionless religion' an attempt to slough off this natural element of Christianity; and thus understood, is not such a quest a recurrent feature of Protestant thought from Luther onward? Does God reveal Himself to the pagan through the true values of his religion, or through the total patterns of society; and if the latter, why was His final self-revelation embodied in a religion? If theologians and social anthropologists wait for each other to answer such questions, they will remain unanswered; and if they are badly posed, at any rate, the book under review shows that truth may be winnowed even from the wrong answers to the wrong questions.

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MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Ferdinand Hahn. *S.C.M. Press, 184 pp., 1965, 21s.*

This is a most careful and valuable study of the New Testament theology of mission. Though one may question the author's judgment on individual texts, it would be difficult to disagree with his chief conclusions. Out of advanced critical positions, he produces a picture which remains traditional and yet illuminating.

The chief questions that must pose themselves in an examination of this subject are: firstly, was the salvation brought by Jesus universal? secondly, did that involve the Church's mission too in an obligation of universality? thirdly, how is that universal, gentile, mission to be related to the Jewish mission and the concept

of the priority of Israel? fourthly, how – when the Church developed an internal, stabilised life – were Church and mission to be related? The answers to these questions given throughout the New Testament may not be in all respects uniform, nevertheless ‘all the different lines converge’. The universality of salvation was not called in question and only a small Palestinian minority could doubt that this placed an obligation upon the Church’s mission too to go beyond Israel. The character of that mission was the greatest problem the early Church had to face, the controversy culminating in the Jerusalem council. In tackling this question the apostolic age has left succeeding generations the essential pattern that all missionary work must conform to, in deciding that the Church has not only a universalism of belief but also a universalism of practice. We have not always been faithful to the implications of this break-through.

The relation of Church and mission is always

a crucial question. The more established the Church is, the more they tend to come apart. Hahn recognises at one point that Peter was both ‘the leader of the Church’ and ‘the most influential missionary’, but seems to fail to stick to this recognition later on. While Cullmann holds that Peter abandoned Church leadership to devote himself to missionary work, Hahn would seem to take the opposite view. Catholic tradition insists that he held to both. Nevertheless the apostolic college, and even the papacy, have seemed in many ages far more concerned with the government of those within than with the mission to those without. A change of stress from missionary to pastoral care appears already in the later New Testament writings. Fullness of Christian life in the world consists in the balance of the two – the fellowship of believers and mission to the beyond; Dr Hahn’s book presents us with a very able study of the new testament genesis of the latter.

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#### FILMSTRIPS FROM THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD.<sup>1</sup>

BIBLIA PAUPERUM: Bodleian Library Filmstrips (Roll 173 I), 40 frames £2.

BIBLIA PAUPERUM: Bodleian Selection (Roll 175 I), 20 frames, £1.

THE FACE OF GOD I: Bodleian Selection (Roll 179 B), 18 frames, £1.

THE FACE OF GOD II: Bodleian Selection (Roll 179 C), 45 frames, £1.

There is no dearth of educational filmstrips nowadays, but how few there are that have any great value. Apart from aesthetic considerations, and in many cases there have apparently been none, there are purely functional factors to be taken into account. What is the point of a filmstrip? Is it to give a picture to illustrate what has been said, or is it to teach something? Generally speaking, if it is only the former then it is a waste of time and money? There cannot be much point in telling the story of the Last Supper, for example, and then showing a picture which only illustrates what happened, without helping us to understand its significance. Such a picture could in fact be harmful in that it tends to save the child the effort of using his imagination. If the latter, it should suggest the theological meaning of the event portrayed rather than merely depicting it.

The Bodleian Library, however, has produced two important filmstrips of a fifteenth-century block-book which not only illustrates the Biblical narratives but draw out their theological meaning.<sup>1</sup> In the filmstrip of the *Biblia Pauperum* not only the words, but the

very persons and deeds of the Old Testament are seen as being in themselves prophetic and are used to explain the purpose of Christ’s life. Underlying this approach is the belief that the Old Testament prepared the way for the New, or, conversely, that Christ came to fulfil the Old Testament, its verbal promises and prophetic actions. The *Biblia Pauperum* is principally concerned with prophetic events, that is, with ‘Biblical typology’. Each frame of the filmstrip contains three sections, two depicting Old Testament situations which throw light upon an incident in Christ’s life, as illustrated in the third section of the frame, e.g., in explanation of the Last Supper we are shown Melchizedek giving bread and wine to Abraham, and Moses receiving the manna in the desert. To take another example, the crucifixion is presented in two frames. On the one it is seen as having been foreshadowed by Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, and by Moses lifting up the Brazen Serpent; on the other frame we see the Church born from the side of the crucified Christ, and this being typified both by the birth of Eve from the side of the

<sup>1</sup>All these filmstrips can be obtained from Dr W. O. Hassall, Bodleian Library, Oxford