

mass, and though such an account inevitably abounds in trivialities, he does show that the Reformers' intention was to restore the worship of the New Testament. Many accusations of vulgarity and formlessness have been advanced against the practice of the Reformed, and though at certain periods they have had some grounds, it remains true that their Eucharist,

especially before subjected to the refining influence of Anglicanism, had a strong impact. It clearly stands in the historic line of liturgical affirmation of the truth of Christ's presence with his faithful people when, in obedience to him, they respond to the proclamation of the mighty acts of God.

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BACKGROUND AND BELIEF, by R. J. Rees. S.C.M. Press Ltd. 13s. 6d.

This book is the result of a survey designed to discover the views of third-year students at Oxford, Cambridge and Bangor on religion and the religious education they received at school. The results are based on four hundred replies to a questionnaire. The author embarked on his survey to seek confirmation or otherwise of his impressions as a headmaster that much religious instruction in schools was not as effective as it might be. He does not make it clear why the study was limited to Bangor, Oxford, and Cambridge which he admits have no particular claim to be 'typical' universities. Moreover, most of the replies from Cambridge were from ex-boarding school students, while those from the other two places were nearly all ex-day pupils from state schools. It is always a tricky business to generalize from a small survey, as many factors may enter in to weight the answers. The above limitations seem to preclude any very definite comparison between the three universities and any wider applicability to students as a whole. The author was presumably seeking information which he could apply to the conditions in his own school, but even then one can think of serious limitations to this survey. For example, not all the members of a school sixth form go to a university and those that do not are probably less likely to be exposed to such intensive religious influence as is found, say, in Oxford and Cambridge. Again, if the students at universities consist, by and large, of a school's brighter pupils, may it not be that their requirements and attitudes differ from those of their less bright contemporaries? I don't know, and this study will not enlighten us on these questions.

Having said all this, it must be admitted that the book still makes interesting reading. One can only be surprised, for example, by the large number of students who said that Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* helped to diminish their faith. C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* wins the palm for helping to increase faith. Much food for thought there. Ordained

ministers did two-thirds of the religious instruction in the boarding schools, compared with only a quarter in the day schools, but apparently little instruction is given by those who have no claim to be specialists at all. Only slightly more than a quarter of the students had read *Honest to God* and the great majority of these seem to have approved of it. Generally, however, the statistics indicate some significant adherence to virtually every possible attitude to religion, from unquestioning orthodoxy to indifferent agnosticism. The comments of the students are sometimes entertaining, as the Cambridge evangelical who, when asked if he prayed in private, wrote 'without ceasing (1 Thess. 5, v. 17)', or the Roman Catholic who said 'all my reading increases and deepens my faith'. One thing can be said; these students did for the most part show interest in the study, and seem to have taken some trouble to write their replies with care and at length.

The results of this study, limited as they are in their application, clearly confirm the author in this impression that a dogmatic and excessively Bible-based religious teaching is far less effective and helpful than a more 'open-ended' approach, which enables pupils to raise the problems which occur to them, and to have them discussed in an intelligent way. I am sure that a large number of thinking Christians share this view now, and a great deal of work has been done in recent years to study the question of religious education and to produce workable syllabuses, catechisms, etc., with the appropriate psychological method to benefit each age group. What is disappointing is the fact that, if we are to accept the results in this book, such work and development is taking so long a time to affect many of the teachers in the schools. As the great majority of these are 'specialists' one feels they might well have been in touch with the latest developments. Perhaps this book will do something to stir their consciences.

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