

SOCIAL HISTORY AND CHRISTIAN MISSION, by Max Warren. *S.C.M. Press Ltd.*, 1967. 27s. 6d.

The achievement of the nineteenth-century missionary movement was so great that one can afford to reflect on its defects. If in the first half of the century the missionaries, the product of a popular revival, were for the most part drawn from the lower middle class, being of the skilled artisan type, and if they had all the narrow prejudice of that group, self-conscious of its own virtue and very conscious of the needs of the poor heathen, if they worked in such close co-operation with colonial governments as to be almost indistinguishable from them, they were also heroic men and women, who laid the foundations of educational systems. It is easy in the light of contemporary knowledge to be critical, but if one examines the history of underdeveloped countries one discovers that what little was done the missionaries did. In the latter half of the century the missionary was more likely to be a university man, but this only made him more prone to accept current ideas. Unfortunately this was the era of imperialism, of racial theories, sometimes propounded by otherwise reputable anthropologists, and the missionary was often only too ready to act in terms of assumptions of European supremacy. Nonetheless they were, in the society of their

day, the entrepreneurs who provided the social services, as the history of medical missions shows. They were the pioneers who were followed by the Governments, and much to the disgust of those Governments they insisted on educating a new bourgeoisie which was to destroy their own attempt to reproduce their homeland overseas. Reaction to their defects produced, not only non-European forms of Christianity, but stimulated national awareness. At times they transcended the limitations of their own backgrounds: David Livingstone, that obsessed man of genius, or on a lesser plane Robert Laws, that venerable and intensely respectable figure, with his pink cheeks and cotton-wool beard, whose iron determination created a nation.

Today the missionary movement has set itself, as Canon Warner says, the task of preaching the Gospel, with the full realization that the Gospel is service, emptied of every trace of patronage, and a service that must find expression in *koinonia*—a brotherhood that transforms every structure that is alien to justice and charity.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

NEW MEANINGS IN HISTORY, by Alban G. Widgery. *Allen and Unwin*. 42s.

Mr Widgery is professor of Philosophy at Duke University, a past president of the American Theological Society and the author of a book *Interpretations of History from Confucius to Toynbee* praised alike by the *Baptist Times* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. Its success has encouraged Mr Widgery to venture on an interpretation of History on his own account. He believes that History is about Individuals and so he begins with a philosophical account of the Individual. Individuals are divisible into Mind and Matter. Matter is subject to strict physical determinism, although Mr Widgery recalls: 'Some decades ago, at least one eminent natural scientist maintained a theory of indeterminism in physics'. Mind is quite free, however. Mr Widgery thinks the biblical teaching about salvation by grace alone and predestination that seem to him to conflict with this freedom of the will, is quite wrong and cites a speech of the Aga Khan's at Delhi in 1911 to prove it. The reader will not be surprised to find that Mr Widgery values Great Individuals above all and that his list, apart from the Aga Khan, includes the Buddha, Jesus

Christ, and Sir Winston Churchill. He also likes Michaelangelo and actually cites two lines from Longfellow. From the Individual we proceed to basic value experiences which begin with food—and sex, which he tells us 'when satisfactorily performed has been enjoyed by one or both concerned'. Then predictably onwards and upwards to a synthesis of value experiences in a broad-minded undenominational religion Mr Widgery believes common to all decent chaps. He is aware that some authorities, the Hindu scriptures for example, don't come up to his standards but these were written by dirty old monks: the common Hindu is sound enough in Mr Widgery's experience.

If this appalling book were merely ignorant and pretentious one would ignore it: it is also, however, a nasty book rotten with Big Society values. 'Surely one cannot say that the Jews have ever been a great nation.' Or 'The massacres of Jews by German National Socialists were not due to any antagonistic feelings towards Jews by Christians. One thing that may have led Hitler to his early anti-

Semitism may have been the part played by Jewish financiers in the support of those who defeated Germany in the First World War.' Somewhere Mr Widgery makes a bitchy remark about the 'trivia considered by some

contemporary Oxford philosophers'. No-one would accuse him of considering trivia: the mind behind the book is quite another thing.

ERIC JOHN

IN SEARCH OF PHILOSOPHIC UNDERSTANDING, by E. A. Burtt. *Allen and Unwin*, London, 1967, pp. xviii + 329. 30s.

Professor Burtt's book opens up interesting historical perspectives, and he has some useful things to say about Ordinary Language Philosophy, Existentialism, and Marxism. He seeks to 'open a path from moral relativism beyond moral nihilism, guided by the vision of a truly ultimate value—a value that is universal while making full room for variety, all-encompassing and yet dynamic, free from dogmatic pretensions and thus ever open to revision' (p. xv). Philosophical inquiry helps replace current presuppositions by others allowing a more insightful interpretation of man's growing experience. The findings based on intuition, logical thinking, observation and experiment are always a function of unconscious interests, desires and fears. Realization of the motives that help or hinder openness to all facets of reality strengthens the need to accord with reality, and makes it easier to overcome all pettiness. Even at the price of seeming inconsistency, nothing must be excluded from one's account of reality. It is less important to have a language that unambiguously reports the present position, than to ensure effective communication and to determine its conditions, thereby to secure a further advance. The philosopher does not say what man is, but asks what he may become. By positive presence to other persons, whole-hearted sharing of their experience, and sensitivity to their values one both grows in love and knowledge oneself, and evokes a mutually enriching response in others.

Self-transcending understanding born of love is reliable and known to be so, but it is never dogmatic—precisely because one is concerned not with mapping out one's present whereabouts, but with the ascent to greater heights. Despite the risk of universal annihilation there is no sane alternative to optimism. The author points beyond the secular tragic hero's limiting preoccupation with self and obstinate immolation to the religious tragic hero's acceptance of death in compassionate concern for justice to others.

The author assumes that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* meant by science empirical science, and that he then thought one could speak intelligibly only in a non-ordinary ideal language (but cf. *Tractatus* 4.11 and 5.5563). He also supposes ordinary language philosophers to regard the word as the unit of meaning, that for them 'use' means 'usage', and that they concentrate on language to the neglect of speech (but cf. Ryle G., *Use, Usage and Meaning*, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XXXV, 1961, pp. 223-30). The work would also have been improved by a careful account of the logical behaviour of expressions including words like 'motive', 'emotion', 'desire', 'feeling', 'unconscious', 'action' and 'thought'. It remains that we should be grateful to Professor Burtt for a book that is stimulating, hopeful, and, to put it simply, lovely.

COLIN HAMER, S.D.B.

SEEING, KNOWING AND BELIEVING, by J. F. Soltis. *Allen and Unwin*, 1966. 25s.

Here is a competent if uninspired work on the philosophy of perception, for which unusually exaggerated claims are made on the dust-cover. The overall flatness of the style is accentuated rather than relieved by the forced jocularity of phrases like 'quite a few pages, ash-trays, deer, and automobiles ago' (p. 75). The dowdy if worthy social worker does herself harm rather than good by periodically dressing up as a street-walker. Yet the important problems in the philosophy of perception, as they apply to seeing in particular, are intelligently handled. The various senses of 'see'

—the diversity of which is illustrated by the sense in which we do, and the sense in which we do not, 'see' a coil of wire which we have mistaken for a snake, or any other object which we mistakenly identify or fail to recognize—are judiciously distinguished by the author. An interesting distinction is made between 'mistake' and 'error', the former occurring when a subject can get right what he has got wrong without additional knowledge, the latter when he cannot do so however favourable the circumstances of perception.

HUGO MEYNELL