

PAUL, by G. Bornkamm. *Hodder & Stoughton*, London, 1971. 259 pp. £2.50.

PERSPECTIVES ON PAUL, by E. Käsemann. *SCM Press*, London, 1971. 171 pp. £2.50.

These English versions of two outstanding German books will greatly help the Pauline studies of many in this country. Both the authors are in agreement about the homology of St Paul, and Professor Bornkamm in an appendix briefly defends the shorter list of genuinely Pauline writings (pp. 241-243) and appears allergic to the idea of any development in St Paul's thinking—the standpoint of Cerfaux and others who retain Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians.

Professor Bornkamm has eminently succeeded in writing a readable and vivid biography, to which is added the main lines of St Paul's teaching. Particularly valuable are his short notes on Pauline usage (pp. 131-135); and all can profit from his careful explanation of righteousness (pp. 138-139). Less convincing is his setting aside of the evidence of Acts, which he does systematically and on principle (cf. Introduction, pp. xv-xxi). He writes much about the literary genre of Acts which is valuable, yet taken too far. Luke composed speeches (so did Thucydides) but also handled facts and evidences from 'eye-witnesses of the word'. There is no need to over-emphasize the

relative lateness of Acts, and the unity of Luke. Acts needs to be spelled out.

Professor Käsemann has been described as 'the man who disagrees with everybody about everything'. This makes naturally for the liveliness and thought-provoking interest of all that he writes, and yet does not inhibit him from saying, 'with the greatest possible emphasis', that Paul must be understood in the light of the Reformation's insight. Any other perspective at most covers part of his thinking: 'it does not grasp the heart of it' (p. 32). Here is a challenge for all who are of another tradition.

The basis of his work is in four lectures delivered several times in America, and now revised. They do not constitute an outline of St Paul's theology, yet highlight certain aspects and range over most of the contemporary writing on St Paul.

The Professor, in a foreword, refers to 'friends and opponents'. This, we hope, is an oddity arising from translation, and not an example of that academic foible which writes off those who dare to disagree.

ROLAND POTTER, O.F.S.

ERASMUS OF CHRISTENDOM, by Roland H. Bainton. *Collins, Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy*, 1972. 80p.

Roland Bainton's biography of Erasmus received considerable critical approval when it first appeared in 1969. Now re-issued in paperback form, this very readable 'Life' should deservedly reach a far wider public; one can only hope that it will be read by all interested in Erasmus himself as well as by students of the Reformation in general. Along with Mrs Mann Phillips' biography (an excellent but altogether shorter book) it should be and remain one of the standard works in English for many years to come.

Bainton has written about a man with whom he plainly sympathizes. He explains in what sense Erasmus was a true reformer, who loved the Christian life, who understood what its essentials were, and who, partly for reasons of temperament, partly because he saw academic dissensions doing no good to that which he loved, hated the useless arguments which in no way encouraged men to lead the better life founded upon a true desire to be Christ-like. He criticized the Papacy and the institutional Church of his day, but he did so with some delicacy, using the rapier to cut rather than the

club to bludgeon for, again, he could see no point in attacking, with the language of abuse favoured by many of the reformers, institutions which were plainly not going to disappear overnight.

What comes across is Erasmus' positive contribution to his age; not merely his legacy to biblical, as opposed to theological, scholarship, but also his attempts to impose a greater sense of the value of reason and moderation upon his contemporaries. He pleaded for peace (he would surely have won a Nobel or Charlemagne Prize had such existed in his day), and Bainton rightly emphasizes this important contribution of his based, as he says, on 'an appeal to reason, humanity and Christian charity'. These constitute the man's essential message, and form the chief reason why (and those who read this book will have ample opportunity of studying what he himself said and wrote) he has continued to appeal to men who have lived since his time, not least to those of our own day.

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