

CHRISTIAN BELIEF. By Alec R. Vidler. (S.C.M. Press; 10s. 6d.)

This course of lectures delivered at Cambridge is an exposition of the basic Christian doctrines as 'an interpretation of our existence and experience in this bewildering universe'. *Bewildering* is perhaps here the operative word; Dr Vidler's conclusions appear tentative almost to the point of reverent agnosticism. 'No interpretation', he says, 'no faith, no system of belief, is demonstrable. The most that a wise man claims for the basic convictions by which he lives is that they make more sense of all the facts with which we have to reckon than any alternative set of convictions.' 'Theology is not at present in a position to throw its weight about, and it makes itself ridiculous when it says, as an English Roman Catholic bishop said a year or two ago, "We have the assurance of our position. We have the certainty of the possession of truth. We have the answers to all the questions".' The author's own standpoint is nearer to that of Bishop Lightfoot, 'I find that my faith suffers nothing by leaving a thousand questions open, so long as I am convinced on two or three main lines'. Dr Vidler's chief conviction—apart from which he is prepared to 'leave a thousand questions open'—concerns 'the reality of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . . .; and that conviction, brought to a point, means staking everything on the finality of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, the Light of the world'.

Here indeed are the fundamentals of Christianity, but how sure can a man's grip be even on these truths without an accompanying conviction as to the reality of a teaching Church? Dr Vidler has much that is both true and illuminating to say about the Church as he conceives it—viz., as 'the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world'—but so vague and generalised a notion hardly does justice to the much more definite ecclesiology of the New Testament. The book makes its most effective appeal (and much of it is extremely effective) in such chapters as 'The Work of Christ', 'The Holy Spirit' and 'The Forgiveness of Sins'; for it is when dealing with these congenial themes, rather than with the 'institutional' elements in Christianity, that the author is most at home.

A.G.

THE RITES OF EASTERN CHRISTENDOM. By Archdale A. King. (Burns Oates, 2 vols.; £2 2s.)

The awakened interest in the Eastern Churches, so earnestly desired by the Holy See and influencing powerfully so many departments of Catholic life, has brought into being many new publications, ranging from pamphlets designed to bring home to schoolboys the fact that Photius is not the name of a flower to treatises whose footnotes lay