

premises are 'factual' and not 'logical'? If the premises are true, that they are the 'factual' kind of truth would hardly seem to be a point against them or against any conclusion logically *derivable* from them.

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## Reviews

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND OTHER FAITHS, by Stephen Neill; Oxford University Press; 21s.

In this book one can say that the dialogue between Christianity and other religions has really begun. This is something which is still so rare that the book deserves serious study from all who are interested in the presentation of the Christian faith in the modern world. Dr Neill's own position is firmly Christian without any hint of syncretism, yet he shows himself 'open' to the truth in every form of religion, and, what is perhaps more important, his object is not so much to try to convince others of the truth of Christianity as to lead them to give it the consideration which it deserves by placing it in its true perspective.

Dr Neill takes into consideration not only Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, but also primitive religion, which he maintains remains the religion still of about 40 per cent of mankind; and then for good measure adds two chapters on Marxism and Existentialism, as being the faith or religion, in the very broad sense of the term (as the ultimate truth to which people are prepared to commit their whole life), of a considerable part of the modern world. His book is therefore an attempt to meet the challenge which Christian faith has to face to-day in all its most serious forms. His method is the same throughout. In each case he tries first to give an objective and sympathetic account of each religion based on the writings of its leading exponents and showing how each religion attempts to meet the challenge of the modern world. He then submits it to a criticism from a Christian point of view. This is done with both candour and charity, attempting to see what is valid but putting the answering challenge of Christianity, or rather of Christ, because that is what Christianity is, in the clearest terms.

On the whole his presentation of the different religions is reasonably objective and is based on a good deal of personal experience. There are some exceptions. In the chapter on Hinduism, he is somewhat unfair to Mahatma Gandhi (to whom for some reason he always refers as 'Mr' Gandhi, perhaps to emphasize that he rejects any claim to his being a 'mahatma'), and to call the Bhagavad

Gita 'flat' and 'jejune', though it is often done by Europeans, seems to show an extraordinary degree of insensitivity. But on the whole there is little cause for complaint, and the chapters on Marxism and Existentialism are exceptionally good.

When it comes to the presentation of the Christian faith itself, Dr Neill's position is more open to criticism, yet it deserves attention. In the first place he is deliberately honest and critical about the actual state of the present Christian Churches. He sees the need for a severe self-criticism on the part of Christians and a return to the most authentic traditions of the faith. It is clear that both Kierkegaard and Karl Barth hold a high place in his esteem. But when it comes to the fundamental basis of Christian faith his position though firm is so broad that it hardly goes beyond what might be generally accepted by the most 'liberal' Christian. It is clear that before the dialogue with other religions can become at all effective, the dialogue between Christians seeking a definite measure of agreement in their common faith has still to go a long way.

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SCHOLASTICISM: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy, by Josef Pieper; Faber and Faber; 21s.

Hegel, in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, excused himself for skipping over the period between the sixth and the seventeenth centuries with seven-league boots because 'it is as prolix as it is trivial, dreadfully written and voluminous'. M. Gilson and a few other scholars have done much to change this picture for us, but the life which their work has breathed into some of the dry bones has been slow to make itself more widely felt; the Pelican-reading public is still left in secure enjoyment of its Hegelian picture. Herr Pieper, who has devoted several books to the study of the thought of St Thomas, has now written the best general introduction to medieval philosophy known to me.

His book begins with Boethius, 'the first of the scholastics'. In this choice of a starting point Pieper makes some illuminating remarks on the general character of medieval philosophy. Contrasting Boethius with Augustine (a little more than a century earlier), he comments on the radical cleavage between the worlds to which the two men belonged: Augustine still breathed the air of the *imperium Romanum*, the intellectual climate of antiquity was still a living reality to him and to his contemporaries; Boethius belonged to a world in which Rome and the civilization of classical antiquity were quickly becoming a relic to be carefully protected and fostered even by a barbarian king. Boethius is the first 'scholastic' in that he was the first creative thinker of considerable power who deliberately used his gifts in the task of assimilating and transmitting to posterity the classical heritage of philosophy. Throughout his account of medieval philosophy Pieper lays stress on this process of learning, of digesting and assimilating something received rather than created. This is the sense he