

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-