

## REVIEWS

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR: A Further Series of Broadcast Talks. By C. S. Lewis. (Bles; 2s. 6d.)

'We might think that God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules: whereas He really wants *people of a particular sort*.'—Christian morality is not to be thought of as a bargain between us and God, with heaven and hell for reward or punishment, but rather as a life-long process in which 'your innumerable choices' turn you 'either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature.'—When we have learnt by faith to trust in God we do not stop trying; but we try 'in a new way, a less worried way . . . Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.' These themes are among the outstanding excellencies of this enlarged version of the autumn talks of 1942, in which four fresh sections have been added, on the cardinal virtues, Christian marriage, hope and charity, to supplement the original talks.

The ability to make these things vivid and personal and vital; the clarity that makes the statement of them simple and convincing: these are as much in evidence as ever. And the preceding quotations will show the quality of much that is said. Yet the book disappoints expectation. First, because it does not seem to cohere. Mr. Lewis tells us that he is going to 'assume the Christian point of view and look at the whole picture as it will be if Christianity is true.' But the whole picture is just what remains obscure, in spite of the clarity with which individual parts stand out. The reason seems to be that though the God-centredness of the Christian life is made clear in the last chapter it is not shown to determine the content of the earlier ones: you get a picture of various parts of Christian behaviour; you do not get a whole picture of the unity of the Christian life in its various aspects. Thus, in the second place, there is something lacking in the individual chapters themselves. For the most part, the description of the cardinal virtues might apply to the Aristotelean rather than to the Christian variety; there are wise things in the section on marriage, yet it leaves the deepest levels untouched; and the same might be said of the treatment of charity. You cannot have Christian morality without Christian dogma for the simple reason that in the last resort Christian morality is not an ethic but a religion: that is the point to which Mr. Lewis leads us in the end, but it does not seem to be implicit at every step, to in-form the whole book.

Mr. Lewis's modesty is always so disarming that to criticise seems churlish. But the value of his writings is so great that it

would be a tragedy if they were allowed through haste or other cause to become less good than his best.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

THE PATH TO PERFECTION. By W. E. Sangster. (Hodder and Stoughton; 7s. 6d.)

This study of John Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection is written by a follower of Wesley primarily for other Wesleyans; for those in fact to whom the doctrine in question is, presumably, already familiar, yet the book will interest a far wider circle. Dr. Sangster's aim, as he himself states it, is 'to endeavour to re-state Wesley's doctrine in the thought-form of our age'; he is in fact a Methodist Modernist. This aspect of his work may well appeal to those members of his own communion who find the doctrine in its original form unacceptable, and we gather from the present work that many do so to-day, but it is no insult to Dr. Sangster's treatment of his theme to say that for the outsider, it is Wesley's doctrine in its original undiluted form that is of interest rather than any modernised version of it.

Dr. Sangster states the doctrine itself as follows:—'He (Wesley) believed and taught this: that in an instant, and by a simple act of faith, perfection was "wrought in the soul." It was indeed the second of two distinct stages in the Christian experience of Salvation as he conceived it; the first consisted of justification, and the second of sanctification; the former being a change in our relations with God, our pardon and reconciliation; the latter a change in ourselves wrought by the Spirit of God. In the first stage, a new heart is given to us, so that we now love God and desire to please Him, and will not *willingly* sin against Him in anything. But sinful tempers remain, and though they are resisted, and resisted successfully, they remain. The second stage, with which we are now chiefly concerned, is *entire* sanctification, which comes as an immediate gift of God, entirely cleansing the heart from sin and slaying the dire root and seed of it.'

This division of the process of justification into two separate stages would appear to be Wesley's especial contribution to the doctrine of 'justification by faith,' and admirers have acclaimed it as 'an unique synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace, with the Catholic ethic of holiness.' This is a provocatively ambitious claim; the impression produced on any detached reader is rather of complete lack of synthesis, an unco-ordinated endeavour to combine two incompatible ideas:

It is only fair to its founder to remember that he never claimed to formulate a new doctrine; his claim was simply to expound the Scriptures; in his 'Plain account of Christian Perfection' the main source of our knowledge on the subject, he quotes the Bible 195