

rience in the Protestant missions of Africa, India and China, and it is significant that it is in these fresh fields the Old Testament should begin to recover its life and meaning. The argument is that every people has to pass through the same stages from paganism to Christianity, and the message of the Old Testament comes to people in these early stages with a directness which it has lost for us. The difficulties which it creates are not denied. The crudity at times of its representation of God, the ferocity displayed in war, and the tolerance of polygamy in the early days all present serious obstacles, but the conception of the gradual education of a barbarous people until it is capable of receiving the final revelation and perfect law of God, provides a sufficient explanation: and the temptation to substitute a Confucian ethic or a Hindu metaphysic as a preparation for the gospel is firmly resisted. The Old Testament is seen as the unique revelation of the divine action in history by which God prepared a people for himself, and the New Testament is seen to depend upon the Old Testament for its interpretation at every turn. The chapters on the Old Testament in the mind of Jesus and the early Church are particularly good, though more might have been said of the use of the Old Testament by the Fathers, especially in such a work as the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. It seems a pity that the author apparently accepts the modern critical theory of the composition of the Pentateuch without question. It is surely time that the grounds of this theory were re-examined. Apart from all other considerations, it must be difficult to have to explain to simple believers that the whole form of the Mosaic law as it is given in the Old Testament is an elaborate fiction of later times.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

THE HISTORY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. Vol. I. By Jules Lebreton, S.J., and Jacques Zeiller. Translated by Ernest C. Messenger, Ph.D. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

The need for a full and detailed history of the Church, based on modern critical research and scholarship, has long been felt, and the appearance, in a translation by Dr. Messenger, of the first volume of what will finally be a complete account of the growth of the Church, from the New Testament to the present day, will be welcomed by all who are interested in Church History.

This present volume, the work of two eminent Catholic scholars, takes the story of the Church as far as the death of St. John, providing not only a vivid account of the life of Our Lord and the work of the Apostles, but also, in a learned and enlightening description of the Roman world and of Judaism, giving a clear idea of the background without which an intelligent study of New Testament history is impossible.

Occasionally one wishes for a fuller defence of the position taken by the authors in certain controversial questions, more particularly

in those passages concerned with the chronology of the Gospels; one might also question M. Zeiller's statement that no oriental religion was ever organised into a church (p. 19). It is too a little troublesome to have to seek out the original sources for some statement through the medium of a secondary authority, though this method of reference would appear to be the deliberate intention of the general editors of the work. The inclusion of a few maps would prove a valuable addition to the book. But these are minor criticisms. The wealth of references to both original and secondary authorities, the judicious footnotes and the well selected bibliographies make it an invaluable aid to students, while not detracting from the appeal it will have to the general reader who wishes merely for an interesting and readable account of the early history of the Church.

N.G.

A DIALOGUE IN THE DESERT. By Gerald Heard. (Cassell; 1s. 6d.)

An imaginative reconstruction of the temptations of our Lord. They form a logical sequence: 'three steps, each leading . . . to a clearer height.' The stones: why not win the leadership of a group by using miracle to free them from material want? But they would rest in their prosperity instead of seeking the living Bread; and the call is to more than a small sect. The Temple: why not force the allegiance of the people by a spectacular gesture, out-manoeuvring at once the opposition of ecclesiastical vested interests? But they will not be led by a trick to worship the real God in spirit and in truth; and the call is to more than a nation. The kingdoms: wolves will keep lambs from Shepherd unless they themselves are overpowered: only Mammon and the sword can establish the Kingdom. But we may not do evil that good, however great, may come; we cannot serve God by betraying Him.

The first step is illustrated by a moving account of the healing of a starving maniac; the third leads on to an encounter with a Nationalist Zealot, a Party man following the Party line with amoral ruthlessness, and the final lesson is reinforced. One imagines that readers may find a discordant ring about some of Christ's speeches, some of the dialogue difficult to read a second time: not indeed that He is made too human—that couldn't be—but that He is made too middling human, too un-divine, too wordy perhaps. But elsewhere there is real perception and congruity; and the main lesson is made vivid. 'My faith, in the hands of those who would spread it, may have a worldly success far more tragic than my personal failure.' Our cause is just, so there is nothing further to worry about—endlessly the same blind fallacy repeats itself. Is it so hard to grasp that good ends are made evil if they are fought for with evil weapons—the holier the end, the deeper the degradation and wickedness? Apparently it is.

G.V.