

THEORIES OF PRIMITIVE RELIGION, by E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 132, 25s.*

This book can be strongly recommended to anybody who wants a lucid and thorough account of what anthropologists have said on the origin and function of religion. Such a reader may feel disappointed that in fact very little of lasting value seems to have emerged from this tangled tale of speculation. With concision and wit Professor Evans-Pritchard guides through the theories, which particularly between 1870 and 1914, claimed to explain the origin of religion by mistaken reasoning, emotional experiences or social consciousness and indicates their logical flaws, their inadequate documentation, and their uselessness for empirical research. Elements of value are given generous recognition; Durkheim's sociological thesis while 'a just-so story' is 'brilliant and imaginative, almost poetical; and he had an insight into a psychological fundamental of religion; the elimination of the self . . . its having no meaning, or even existence seen as part of something greater and other'. Particularly full treatment is granted to Levy-Bruhl and Pareto, partly because of the misinterpretation they have suffered and partly because they studied a favourite topic of Evans-Pritchard's, the relation between empirical knowledge and non-empirical beliefs. However the fair-mindedness of the survey strengthens the author's claim that this mass of theorising is now of interest merely as reflecting the crisis of faith of the later nineteenth century.

In a concluding chapter the author considers the prospects for modern social anthropology, with its aim of establishing valid correlations between particular institutions, in the forming of a genuine sociology of religion, here the guiding principle must be 'Religion is what religion does'. Studies of comparative religion, based on texts and sacred books are of little interest to the anthropologist, since they give us limited insight into the thought and action of ordinary people, and it is ordinary people the

anthropologist is chiefly interested in. Some recent studies by Lienhardt, Middleton, and Turner of the British school and by Tempels and Theuvs in the Congo are referred to as examples of what can and should be done in this line.

It would be extremely difficult to write a better book within the scope and length of this one; yet perhaps one may open a door which Evans-Pritchard leaves tantalisingly ajar, when he notes how we all to some extent take up Marrett's distinction between religion viewed by theology and by social anthropology. To what extent is the 'religion' of theology the same as the 'religion' of social anthropology? The challenge is dodged by the humanist for whom social anthropology must be completely adequate to explain Christianity and by the Bonhoefferian theologian for whom Christianity is not a religion; for the Catholic it seems necessary to say that his faith is both the unique act of divine self-revelation and a religion in a considerable degree understandable by comparison with paganism. This may seem trite; in fact it is extremely relevant to a great many questions. Is not the contemporary quest for a 'religionless religion' an attempt to slough off this natural element of Christianity; and thus understood, is not such a quest a recurrent feature of Protestant thought from Luther onward? Does God reveal Himself to the pagan through the true values of his religion, or through the total patterns of society; and if the latter, why was His final self-revelation embodied in a religion? If theologians and social anthropologists wait for each other to answer such questions, they will remain unanswered; and if they are badly posed, at any rate, the book under review shows that truth may be winnowed even from the wrong answers to the wrong questions.

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MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Ferdinand Hahn. *S.C.M. Press, 184 pp., 1965, 21s.*

This is a most careful and valuable study of the New Testament theology of mission. Though one may question the author's judgment on individual texts, it would be difficult to disagree with his chief conclusions. Out of advanced critical positions, he produces a picture which remains traditional and yet illuminating.

The chief questions that must pose themselves in an examination of this subject are: firstly, was the salvation brought by Jesus universal? secondly, did that involve the Church's mission too in an obligation of universality? thirdly, how is that universal, gentile, mission to be related to the Jewish mission and the concept