

Books of the Week

The Image of God

Dr. W. F. Lofthouse reviews

THE IMAGE OF GOD BY MAN, by David Cairns (Student Christian Movement Press, 18s.).

LIFE IS COMMITMENT, by J. H. Oldham (S.C.M. Press, 12s. 6d.).

A FARTY NOT TUGG TIMES, by Harry Emman Foddick (S.C.M. Press, 8s. 6d.).

RECENT THOUGHT IN FOCUS, by Donald Nicholl (Sheed and Ward, 16s.).

Many of those who used to attend the annual conferences of the Students of the Movement at Swanwick... will remember the prophet-like and somewhat unkempt appearance of a Scottish professor from the far North whose pronouncement and incisive and challenging thought alike clashed with the "Oxford accent" around him.

The subject of the book is as obscure as any which a Biblical theologian could choose. The title recalls the creation narrative in the first chapter of Genesis... a few references to the image in the Hebrew written meant by the word he used, nor whether he intended to suggest a difference between "image" and "likeness."

The larger part of Mr. Cairns' work is taken up with the consideration of the various guesses (in the way it is permitted) in answer to the riddle; from Irenaeus to the Schoolmen, the Reformers, and not forgetting Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, to the moderns, chiefly Kierkegaard and Mr. Cairns' chosen guide, Emil Brunner.

Mr. Cairns patiently expounds and disentangles his authorities. He shows theology has done its best to reconcile the authors of the image-narrative and the fall-narrative—we must needs regard them now as independent. And if the reader pauses between Mr. Cairns' chapters, he will reflect how different might have been the shapes of the Christian doctrines of man and of sin, if theologians had not held themselves bound to start with the earlier half of the third chapter of Genesis and its place in later Jewish and Rabbinical speculation.

Until this is done there will always be something unconvincing in our own preaching. And Mr. Cairns, despite all his scholarly desire to keep himself in the background, knows this. He follows Brunner's "Christian existentialism." The image—the engraving, if we may follow the suggestion of the Hebrew root "to make"—confrontation with God, his accountability before God, a pregnant thought; but it is hardly clear how responsibility to God could be called likeness to God, unless by a considerable extension of the "I-Thou relationship" which Ruber has done so much to keep before us.

Who for me wou'dst to die / Loves me still; I know not why. To those who know anything of the strenuous career of "Joe" Oldham there will be a peculiar interest about his latest book, Life is Commitment. The very word "commitment" has been characteristic of the man from his undergraduate days sixty years ago.

with the commitment of my whole being." God's "confrontation" with "my response." And in this world, Christ is a fact; the fact; because He showed man, a lost soul, to be a loved, a redeemable soul also. The section on the Church does not escape the antithesis which He is waiting for all who use that word.

DR. H. E. FOSDICK is one of the most widely read authors of religious books in America. Last year he delivered at the Pacific School of Religion three lectures whose spirit is well expressed by the title he chose for them. They were written in answer to about a thousand Christian leaders, not for the general reader.

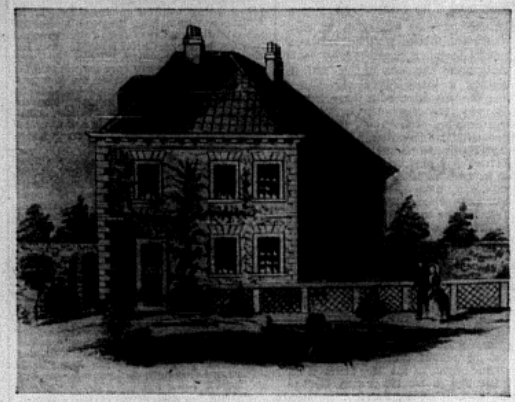
"THE world into which we are born, and in which our destiny is so hard to discover"—we must get even with it in some way; and to do this Mr. Nicholl would like to see the lens of the microscope focused on the "burly" that it deals in. Dr. Fosdick's "matchless way with the innumerable small and large problems which ordinary people have to face."

The second half of the book is occupied with the natural sciences, mainly evolution, in which Mr. Nicholl is deeply concerned with the earlier and now more or less out-of-date Darwinian, and the geologists' speculations on the genes and their significance, and the latest bewildering discoveries of anthropologists, teeth and jaw-bones and fragments of femurs, did apes precede man, or men apes? They have no answer.

John Wesley KEEN cuts the wind o'er the bleak marshland, / Dark the menace of rising sea; / A people, inhospitable, / At the child's clasp, adversity. Far distant now the earlier bliss / Of tranquil studies, kindred friends; / Only remained the hunger fierce / To tear the Rock for God's high ends.

It Was the Birth of An Epoch

REV. DR. FRANK BAKER ON THE WESLEY ANNIVERSARY



The Rectory at Epworth, where John Wesley was born. The picture is taken from an old print.

THE searchlight and the microscope have been trained on John Wesley for over two hundred years, and now we celebrate the 250th anniversary of his birth. Yet new biographical details about him are continually being discovered, and the acknowledged stature of his world-wide influence grows steadily.

The Rev. Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth, was the kind of man who occasionally did forget unimportant things such as birthdays or the number of his children. He was engrossed in erudite scholarship and in the high affairs of both Church and State.

recounted the story to Alan Clarke, and although some details of the narrative may need to be revised, the main outline is clear:—"Were I write my own life (said John Wesley), I should begin it before I was born, merely for the purpose of mentioning a disagreement between my father and mother, 'Suskey' and my father, my mother one day after family prayer, 'why did you not say to me this morning to the prayer for the king?'"

William III died on March 8, 1702, and was succeeded by Anne, a Stuart who was readily acknowledged as the Wesley's. The path of reconciliation was now easier to tread. Samuel Wesley returned home, and was there when the rectory was devastated by fire on July 31.

Susanna Wesley had had almost a year's respite from child-bearing. Here one suggests that this might have had something to do with the supreme moment of the child who was the first fruits of the reunion of the rector and his wife? Actually there was an interval of just over two years between the birth of John and of the preceding twin—the longest interval she knew during her twenty years of child-bearing, though there seem to have been three other occasions when her last baby was (or would have been, had it lived) almost two years old by the birth of the next.

Birth and Baptism JOHN WESLEY was born on Thursday, June 17, 1703, Old Style. We know nothing more than that about the actual event, and indeed do not know that for certain. Neither John Wesley himself, nor even his father in his later years, was clear about the details of those early days, chiefly because the main documentary evidence, the parish register, was destroyed when the rectory caught fire on February 9, 1709, and young Jacky was rescued as a child plucked out of the burning.

Epworth, August 23rd, 1728. John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of Lincoln College, was twenty-five years old the 17th of June last, having been baptized a few hours after his birth by me. Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth. The rector, seems strangely to have overlooked the fact that he had made the usual annual transcripts of his parish register for the Bishop of Lincoln—or else he trusted too implicitly to his memory. John Wesley, in his naturally accepted his father's word, and all his biographers have left it there.

This contemporary evidence shows that Samuel Wesley was mistaken about the date either of the birth or of the baptism of his son. The birth date seems likely to have been preserved from year to year, however, so that the most natural explanation is that Samuel was confusing the supposed urgent baptism of John with that of another of his many children. The alternative that John was actually born on July 3, 1703—July 14 by modern reckoning—would indeed be a fact for the historians, who every textbook and work of reference would be over a fortnight wrong about one of

the epochal dates in world history, though perhaps the man in the street would not trouble himself unduly.

Actually the man in the street is already puzzled sufficiently by the fact that John Wesley seems to have had two birthdays each year: June 17, Old Style, and June 28, New Style. The fact was that the calendar had sadly lost step with the sun, owing to the shortcomings of Ptolemy's astronomers. England was one of the last countries to put things right by adopting in 1752 the Gregorian "New Style" Calendar. By that time we were eleven days behind the sun, and this was corrected by describing the day which followed Wednesday, September 2, as Thursday, September 14. Up to 1752 Wesley had celebrated his birthday on June 1, but the date now known as June 28, and he continued to write birthday reflections in his Journal on this latter date to the end of his life.

One other interesting fact is to be noted about Wesley's baptism. Jonathan Crowder, one of his preceptors, preserved the following of repeated tradition from Wesley's own lips: "I have heard him say, that he was baptized by the name of John Benjamin; that his mother had buried two sons, one called John, and the other Benjamin, and that she united their names in him. But he never made use of the second name. Here again family tradition was at fault. The parish register transcript shows that he was simply called John. The 1701 transcript, however, shows how the mistake arose, through confusion with another child. On May 17, 1701, Susanna presented her husband with twins, and on May 31 these were baptized with the names John Benjamin and Anne." (Historians have previously thought that the latter was born in 1702.) John Benjamin, the only Wesley child to possess two names, was buried at Epworth on December 30 of that same year.

His name was plain John, though the family always called him "Jacky," and later "Jack." But the tradition about his name and about his hurried baptism were both reminders of the fact that, like others of the family, he was a weakling at birth. A surviving boy, however, even though a weakling, was a great event in the Wesley household. There had been at least six boys before him, but only one had survived, the eldest, Samuel who was now a young man of thirteen, on the verge of leaving home for Westminster School, where he was readily acknowledged as the Wesley's. The path of reconciliation was now easier to tread. Samuel Wesley returned home, and was there when the rectory was devastated by fire on July 31.

Mothers and Sisters

UNTIL the birth of brother Charles in December, 1708, however, John knew little but the company of womenfolk. His sisters were all like himself in one minor respect at least. Each was baptized by one name, and was brought up by another. There was staid Emily, aged ten, followed by three stepping-stones with only a year between them, boisterous Susanna (eight), poor peasant, dwarfed Mabel (seven), and imaginative little Mehetabel (six). Then there was a gap to two-year-old Anne. The subsequent surviving children were Martha and Kezia (the "fire-child"), with Charles sandwiched between.

The old thatched building of timber and plaster in which John Wesley was born, and the existing brick rectory in which he was reared after the fire of 1709, constituted in their way a self-sufficiency. The rectory was cut off from society by flooding rivers and dykes and by almost impassable roads, and cut off from the rough townfolk of Epworth itself by a high wall and a class distinction. The rector's children needed to learn self-sufficiency, and to learn it the hard way. Yet they were undoubtedly a happy group for the most part, finding pleasure in the sharing of tasks and problems, ideas and dreams, and even in the constant mending and makeshifts. Both before and after marriage the girls all competed for the affection of the eldest of Jack, and were a potent influence upon him.

In all that household of womenfolk, however, the predominant influence was that of Susanna Wesley, both scholar and saint, theologian, pastor, and administrator, a woman who served her many children alike as mother, nurse, housekeeper, and schoolmaster. From her John Wesley learnt both to pray and to count and to read and to think. Upon her he based that idealized theory of woman which was to lead him into such treacherous paths in later years. Her all-enveloping presence dwarfed the warm affection and quick jealousies, the accomplishments and the romantic longings of his sisters. No one can measure the influence of that devoted mother who set down in her private diary the following prayer for her Jacky when he was approaching eight years of age and was more particularly careful of the soul of this child... that I may do my endeavour to instil into his mind the principles of true religion and virtue. Lord, give grace to him, sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success."

That is one of the world's loveliest prayers, most abundantly answered...

Samuel Wesley, a portrait taken from a print at Wesley's House, London.

her famous father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, of the St. Paul's Nonconformity." In order to go out into the wilderness with another Samuel, like herself a convert to Anglicanism from Dissent. Their married life had been a hard struggle from its commencement in the year of Revolution, 1688. Even after 1693, when William III presented Samuel Wesley with the comfortable living of Epworth, trouble still dogged them, and the burden of debt was only lightened for a time, not discarded. Had they been childless things would have been different for them and very different for us. By the summer of 1701, however, they had had thirteen or fourteen children (including two sets of twins) in less than thirteen years.

Child of Reconciliation

THE years 1701 and 1702 were especially full of trouble for the Epworth household. The parishioners' uneasy suspicion of their scholarly, blunt, Tory parson had by now hardened into a sullen hatred, and the occasion was flared up into open violence to his person and his property. To make things worse, an estrangement developed between Samuel and Susanna Wesley, who both held decided views and strong personalities. Although they owed Epworth to William III, Susanna's Jacobite sympathies prevented her from accepting him with a good grace. The Act of Settlement securing the Hanoverian Succession received the Royal Assent on June 12, 1701, and in the following months special prayers were asked for the king in his falling health. The situation precipitated a domestic crisis at Epworth. John Wesley himself

“It was the Birth of an Epoch [250th Anniversary of John Wesley’s Birth].” *Methodist Recorder* (June 25, 1953): 9.

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Rev. Dr. Frank Baker on the  
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The searchlight and the microscope have been trained on John Wesley for over two hundred years, and now we celebrate the 250th anniversary of his birth. Yet new biographical details about him are continually being discovered, and the acknowledged stature of his world-wide influence grows steadily. The last word has been spoken on neither. In this article some facts about John Wesley’s birth are included that have never been previously published; they were forgotten even by his own father, and never known to Wesley himself.

The Rev. Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth, was the kind of man who occasionally did forget unimportant things such as birthdays or the number of his children. He was engrossed in erudite scholarship and in the high affairs both of Church and State. He was not at his best in the administration either of his parish or his home. In both spheres much responsibility fell upon the capable shoulders of his wife Susanna—a woman in a million. A courted beauty accustomed to the bustle of London life, her mind and interest were sufficiently keen for her to master the controversy between Church and Dissent in her early ’teens, and her courage and independence so marked that she braved the wrath of her famous father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, “the St. Paul of Nonconformity,” in order to go out into the wilderness with another Samuel, like herself a convert to Anglicanism from Dissent.

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“Were I to write my own life (said John Wesley), I should begin it before I was born, merely for the purpose of mentioning a disagreement between my

father and mother. ‘Sukey,’ said my father to my mother one day after family prayer, ‘why did you not say *Amen* this morning to the prayer for the king?’ ‘Because,’ said she, ‘I do not believe the Prince of Orange to be king.’ ‘If that be the case,’ said he, ‘you and I must part; for if we have two kings, we must have two beds.’ My mother was inflexible. My father went immediately to his study; and, after spending some time with himself, set out for London, where, being *Convocation Man* for the diocese of Lincoln, he remained without visiting his own house for the remainder of the year.”

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### Mothers and Sisters

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