

BOOK REVIEWS (Cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

After a certain amount of disputation, Gentiles were admitted to the Christian fellowship on easier terms than to the Jewish, and brought with them the myth of a God who dies and rises again to bring new life to those who are united with him by sacramental rites. This deity was identified with the crucified prophet who was to return as Messiah; and so, from a minor Jewish sect, a new world religion was born.

What is provocative about this reconstruction is, of course, its suggestion that Jesus attached no religious significance to his own death, and that the New Testament's reiterated assertions that he did so reflect a later generation's identification of him with the hero of a Gentile myth. If Loisy is right about this, the faith of the New Testament Church, to say nothing of later generations of Christians, is something almost completely unconnected with anything that Jesus thought about himself. His grounds for this view are not clearly stated, and there are very few New Testament scholars who share it. The writings attributed to John are, indeed, widely regarded as reflecting Gentile religious influences; but those attributed to Paul—which are full of the idea that the death of Jesus is a source of life to believers—seem to move in the same late-Jewish thought-forms which Loisy admits to have been those of Jesus himself, though with modifications introduced by the apostle to meet new problems. (This point is very fully developed in Albert Schweitzer's book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*; and I understand that Professor Knight, of Dunedin, has something in the press on the subject.) Further, the considerations which suggest even to Loisy that Jesus claimed to be the "Messiah-designate" suggests just as strongly that he came to think of his death as a necessary prelude to his Messiahship.

—Arthur N. Prior

THE LAW AND THE PROPHET

KARL MARX: HIS LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT. By Isaiah Berlin. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press.

ENGLISH CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY. By S. B. Chrimes. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press.

THE simultaneous appearance in the Home University Library of one book on Marx and another on the British Constitution—the former in its second edition—is a temptation to the spirit ironic, as well as proof of the catholicity of the editors. For though many exponents of the British Constitution go their way as if Marx had never been, it is impossible to doubt Mr. Berlin's opening assertion that "no thinker in the 19th Century has had so direct, deliberate and powerful an influence upon mankind as Karl Marx." Mr. Berlin wisely forearms his readers against Marxism without Marx by presenting two subtly interpenetrated studies of the man and his doctrine. So far as the reviewer knows, there does not exist in English a more satisfactory biography of Marx's mind, unless it is in Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* which is more impressionistic and wider in its scope. Only the English school of Hodgskin, Thompson, Gray and their fellows seems to receive less than its due. Mr. Berlin, who entertains neither animus nor adulation, is a master of the

swift, but not cursory, delineation of a social and intellectual milieu, and he inspires the confidence which comes from a knowledge that an author is holding a good deal in reserve. Here we have the whole Marx—paterfamilias, friend and foe, thinker, political organiser and tactician, a sedentary rebel, who at once repels affection and demands respect. This book adds nothing to the Marxian exegesis, nor is it intended to. It does not attempt a rounded account of the doctrine, but it succeeds, almost brilliantly, in its task of introduction, of inviting to further inquiry. Whatever may be the case with Communists, non-Communists cannot afford to be ignorant of Communism. Mr. Berlin's book, together with Professor Laski's *Communism* in the same series, and the Communist Manifesto itself, would form an excellent work-out for the inquirer before he tackles the steeper gradients of Popper or Eastman.

It is not easy to make a useful survey of English constitutional history in less than 200 pages; but the thing is done, and, on the whole, well done. It is true that the flash-back technique—a first section on the Constitution as it is, followed by a longer explanation of how it became so—is dubiously applicable to this living monument. But, if Dr. Chrimes does not quite approach his subject with the trembling hands recommended by Burke, no one can complain that he fails in proper reverence for it. He is a competent guide, and he misses nothing of importance. His book is no lucky dip, like the comparable *History of England* written recently by Professor Woodward, and the student will not be surprised by any unexpected facts, or even by any familiar facts in unexpected wrappings. Dr. Chrimes is a resolute pedestrian. He avoids the beckoning by-ways, saunters through the Middle Ages, and strides briskly—much too briskly—through the last century or so. One reader would willingly have foregone something of the *Curia Regis* to learn more of how British political institutions have fared under the impact of universal suffrage, extended social services, the radio and total war. It is not necessary to believe that all is dross that is not Marxian in order to agree that constitutional history should be related more closely than it commonly is to the material conditions of existence. Was it, after all, in vain that Marx turned Hegel "right side up"? One has the feeling that many constitutional historians would be better tradesmen (whatever their specialities) if some academic martinet had compelled them in youth to ponder the influence on the British Constitution of, say, the trade union, or the telephone, or the typewriter, or (come to that) the totalisator. The day has its own peculiar problems. The past should illuminate the present of our institutions; it should not overshadow their present any more than it can exhaust their rationale.

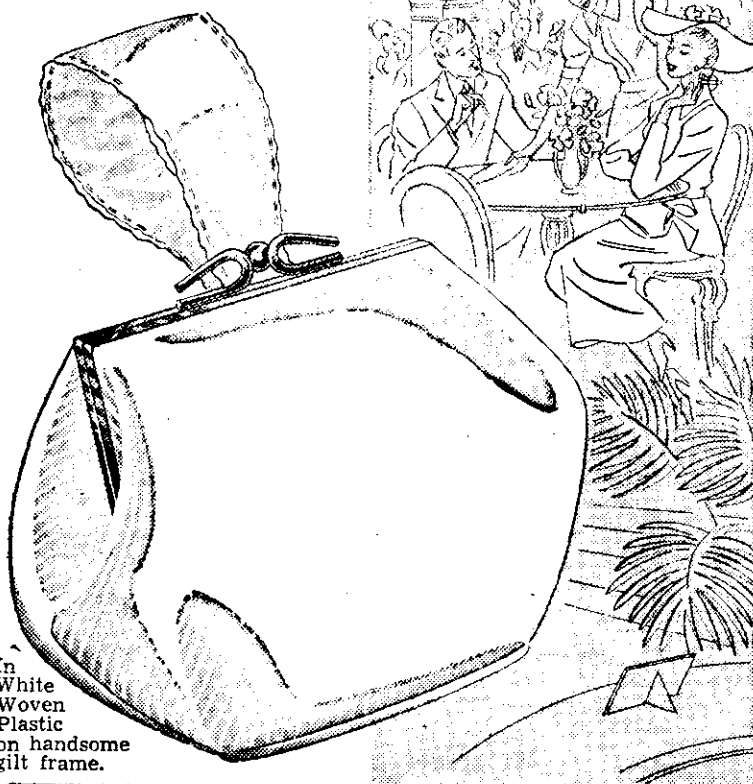
—N.C.P.

BACK TO METHUSELAH

FOUNDATIONS IN THE DUST (A Story of Mesopotamian Exploration). By Seton Lloyd, F.S.A. Oxford University Press.

SETON LLOYD'S title is well chosen; for the story of Mesopotamian archaeology since the first spade cut into a city mound in 1842, is the story of

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