

**The Essentials of Christianity.** By Craig S. Thoms, Ph. D., Professor of Sociology in the University of South Dakota, author of "The Bible Message for Modern Manhood," "The Workingmen's Christ," etc. Philadelphia, 1919. The Judson Press (A. B. P. S.). 347 pp. \$1.25.

This work commends itself for at least three qualities: It is thoroughly modern in the best, the positive, sense; it is fully sympathetic with the questions that vex many and especially youthful souls; it is eminently practical.

For the author the practical is always to the fore. He is not at all concerned to defend a theoretical Christianity. It is a fault of the book that it encourages a disregard for theology and for definition that tends inevitably to cultivate content with superficiality. The purpose is quite clear to a mature student and quite commendable. The author would put mere theories and dogmatic formulas in a place of such relative inferiority as to remove anxiety from the hearts of those who are vexed with questionings of their traditional teaching or notion. Thus far well.

By all means let us get down to reality, to vitality, to experience. It remains, however, that definitions promotes clarity and conviction and help on to aggressive action. If the author neglects this side it is not because he lacks genuine interest in a vigorous Christianity but because his interest and his method prevent his seeing as widely as one might wish.

One will hardly find a more readable outline of Christian principles, nor in so brief a compass one better suited to its end of stimulating and encouraging active faith.

The nine "essentials" are interesting for what they are and for their omissions: Faith, God, Christ, Evolution, the Bible, Prayer, Immortality, the Church, Co-operating with God, Hope and Love are included, actually though not explicitly in Faith, which leaves some confusion. Regeneration ought to be more definitely set forth.

The views of the Bible are quite helpful but not very accurate in some parts.

The author sounds a note of clear, strong appreciation and praise of the Church at every turn where it appears.

The work is to be commended as one of the very best practical volumes in elementary apologetic.

W. O. CARVER.

### III. SOCIOLOGICAL.

**The Social Gospel and the New Era.** By John Marshall Barker, Ph. D., Professor of Sociology in Boston University School of Theology. New York, The MacMillan Co., 1919. 232 pp. \$1.75.

Mr. Henry C. Sheldon, who writes the introduction to this volume, refers to its "comprehensiveness" and "balance." In this he is correct. It is a very sane book. The author is not given to extreme or one-sided views. He emphasizes the social meaning of the gospel but he does not forget its individual meaning. He insists that it aims at the transformation of society, but puts emphasis upon the fact that it must advance toward that end primarily through the conversion of individuals. In the program for Christian service which he suggests he mentions first "individual evangelism." He recognizes the great work which Christianity has done in the past in combating and overthrowing social evils, but he calls attention to the fact, which can hardly be gainsaid, that the church in the past has been too negative in its social efforts; and insists that it should become more constructive, devoting more effort to prevention.

It is a wholesome book. It must be said that it presents no new truth and does not look at the old truth from a new point of view. Nevertheless it will help to strengthen the social conscience and clarify the social thinking of its readers.

C. S. GARDNER.