

them if we can, that we should face a world that does not contain any gods.

And this is exactly what we can tell them; this is our task. This is the task of preaching that, it seems to me, we are here this week to organise, the task of telling men that they can have images if they like, they may do no harm, but they are not what we are talking about, none of them are God: God is not part of the world, God is the unfathomable mystery of love by which the world is; there are no gods, there is only this love. And when we preach the gospel in these terms, the terms of our tradition, our hearers will indeed always be puzzled, perhaps especially our christian hearers will be puzzled. They will say: Is this what the Church teaches? Where is the religion, where is the piety, where are the gods? Where is the special language of church things? If we speak as the Spirit has given us utterance our hearers will be bewildered because each will hear us speaking in his own language the wonderful things of God.

## Reviews

**MESSIAH: SIX LECTURES ON THE MINISTRY OF JESUS** by J C O'Neill,  
*Cochrane Press, Cambridge 1980. pp 127 £3.50.*

This work consists of the six Cunningham Lectures John C O'Neill delivered at New College, Edinburgh in 1975–1976. These lectures deal with: John the Baptist and Jesus; The Kingdom; Jesus as teacher of the Law. Why did Jesus go up to Jerusalem? Bread and Wine, The Apostles. To these have been added three Appendices: The Synoptic Problem; The silence of Jesus and the son of man; The expression "The Kingdom". In light of O'Neill's previous works one might expect to find a freedom to reject and challenge traditional understandings and interpretations, and this work does not disappoint the reader in this regard. O'Neill has never felt bound by "the assured results of Biblical scholarship", and these lectures reveal that he still feels free to challenge such "results" and offer alternative explanations.

In chapter one O'Neill investigates what John the Baptist and Jesus thought of each other and calls into question the critical view that John did not see himself as the forerunner of Jesus. He begins by arguing that there is no reason why John could have believed that Jesus was the coming one of whom he spoke since what is said in Matthew 3:11-12 could apply not only to God but also to His Messiah and that the Jews accepted the possibility that the Messiah would for a time live unrecognised among them. Next he argues that Matthew 11:3; Acts 19:3-5; 18:24-28; and Clementine Recognitions 1.60 demonstrate that John's disciples could and did question themselves as to whether Jesus was the Messiah. Then in analysing

the baptism account he concludes that the Matthean version of the voice from heaven ("This is my beloved Son . . .") is more authentic and that these words were actually uttered by John, himself. In the latter part of the chapter he then seeks to establish that Jesus viewed John as the greatest man who ever lived.

In the next chapter O'Neill discusses whether Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was realised in his ministry. He does this by examining two sayings of Jesus: Matthew 12:28 and Luke 17:20-21. Matthew 12:28, he argues, teaches that the judgment of the kingdom has already been decided upon (by the reaction of Jesus' listeners) even if it has not yet been executed. The latter passage, which speaks of the kingdom of God "within you" is then interpreted as teaching what the condition must be which will bring in the kingdom rather than a description of the nature of the kingdom. It should be interpreted "the kingdom is within your grasp". He concludes that these passages do not in any way teach a realised eschatology (ala C D Dodd) or an eschatology in the process of realisation (ala J Jeremias).

Chapter three is devoted to the issue of whether Jesus taught his hearers to keep the Law. O'Neill points out that in only two cases can Jesus seriously be said to overthrow the Law: with regard to food regulations and with regard to divorce. The former (Matthew 15:11) he interprets as follows: "Of course what goes into a man defiles him, but more important is the defilement that comes from what he utters". With regard to the latter, Jesus is seen as not legislating but simply trying to stop husbands from exercising their right to divorce unsatisfactory wives. He concludes that Jesus did not teach his hearers to disregard any part of the Law or to go

behind it.

Chapter four deals with whether Jesus went intentionally to Jerusalem to die for man's sins. Following the lead of Schweitzer, O'Neill maintains that Jesus thought that as the Messiah he had to suffer and that his martyr's death would have atoning power. He seeks to buttress this view by appealing to such passages as: Matthew 26:6-13, where Jesus accepted an anointing for his death; the parable of the bridegroom, where the bridegroom is understood as a messianic designation; and the parable of the wicked husbandmen, where the son is "sacrificed" by the owner. O'Neill concludes that Jesus therefore went to Jerusalem as God's Son to sacrifice himself for mankind.

In chapter five the discussion centres on the words of the Last Supper. In his discussion O'Neill concludes that Jesus did not expect the kingdom to come upon his death; the reference to not drinking the cup again until the kingdom comes implies a delay in the coming of the kingdom; the reference to drinking the blood of the covenant is not authentic because sacrificial blood was never drunk by the Jews; the reference to the blood of Jesus being poured out for sins is authentic but uttered on a different occasion; and the reference to eating bread which is his body is authentic because the parts of the sacrifice were eaten but that this was also said on a different occasion. The authenticity of the latter reference is then supported by reference to Matthew 16:5-12 and John 6:53.

The final chapter is devoted to the question of whether Jesus appointed "ministers". O'Neill argues in the affirmative and supports this conclusion from the following: logic not only requires that those present at the Lord's Supper would preside at future administrations of the Sup-

per but I Corinthians 11:23-26 is a set of instructions for those presiding at the Lord's Supper and not for the congregation in general; certain conditions of discipleship, such as Matthew 10: 1-11:1, are special conditions for those who would be ministers; the Leicester Codex 69 version of Luke 9:60 omits "to bury their own dead" and this variant, which is authentic, is addressed to future ministers of the kingdom; the story of the rich young ruler is addressed to potential ministers who alone are required to sell all.

In the three appendices O'Neill seeks to demonstrate that: the solution of the Synoptic Problem involves an Urmarkus in Hebrew or Aramaic which Matthew, Mark, and Luke translated independently; Jesus never used the title "Son of man" of himself but that when he used the expression he was simply referring to himself as "a man"; and the expression Jesus actually used was not "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven" but simply "the kingdom".

Whereas the present reviewer was prepared to find new and independent interpretations and hypotheses by O'Neill on these various subjects, he must confess that after a time he began to think that whereas O'Neill was not bound to the "assured results of New Testament scholarship" he may be more bound than he

realises to an iconoclasm of such results. Many (politeness causes me not to say "most") of his arguments are unconvincing and strained. One cannot help but sense that at times he manipulates the evidence in order to support his conclusions. Only a few examples of this can be mentioned: his use of the Leicester Codex 69 against all the other textual evidence to make Luke 9:60 prove his point; his attempt to make Matthew 12:28 say "If you are wrong about my exorcisms . . . then you have pronounced against yourselves the judgment God will pronounce when he comes openly to reign"; his appeal to "logic" to deny that Jesus over-ruled Moses on the issue of divorce; etc. This reviewer also finds questionable both the assurance with which O'Neill believes that he can reconstruct what occurred behind our New Testament texts as well as the legitimacy of such reconstructions. The book is also marred by a number of careless mis-spellings.

The value of this work is that it makes us realise that we must always rethink and re-evaluate the "assured results of Biblical scholarship", for the historical-critical method must be continually critical of its own results and methodology. The reconstructions of O'Neill, however, are far from convincing.

ROBERT H STEIN

**BOETHIUS: THE CONSOLATIONS OF MUSIC, LOGIC, THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY** by Henry Chadwick. *Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981. pp xv + 313 £18.00.*

The simultaneous publication of this study and the collected papers in honour of Sir Basil Blackwell edited by Margaret Gibson (to which Professor Chadwick has contributed the introduction) fill a long-felt gap in the literature on Boethius. Both studies cover the life and work of Boethius in all their aspects. The essays are concerned both with Boethius himself and

with his medieval influence; the present volume takes a much briefer look at the medieval Boethius and after. The essays present the *status quaestionis* on each of their topics with the specialist's needs in mind; Professor Chadwick's *Boethius* is designed to introduce the general reader to Boethius as well as to supply the specialist with a full biography and the results of