

REVIEWS

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF ST JOHN. By E. K. Lee. (S.P.C.K.; 17s. 6d.)

THE NEW TESTAMENT AGAINST ITS ENVIRONMENT. By F. V. Filson. (S.C.M. Press; 6s.)

THE OLD TESTAMENT AGAINST ITS ENVIRONMENT. By G. Ernest Wright. (S.C.M. Press; 6s.)

THE PROBLEM OF CHRIST IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By W. R. Matthews. (Oxford University Press; 7s. 6d.)

THE GOSPEL OF ST MARK. By R. H. Lightfoot. (Oxford University Press; 10s.)

The tendency to return to biblical theology so noticeable today outside the Church is one that the Catholic can but welcome. St Jerome's words become ever more actual: 'To live amidst these things, to meditate upon them, to know and seek nothing else—is not this in some sort to dwell in the heavenly kingdom while yet here on earth?' (Ep. liii, 10.) It is in this spirit that we approach *The Religious Thought of St John*—though pedantically we might quarrel with the title and ask, what thought of St John is not religious? Anyway it is certainly an 'essay in biblical theology' and, as such, eminently readable and to be recommended. Mr Lee takes it that the Fourth Gospel and the three Joannine Epistles are by one and the same author, and then handles some of the great themes of this *corpus joanneum*: God, the Word with God, the Word lying in the darkness, Salvation, etc. Judicious use is made of scholars' materials, and the standpoint of synthesis and biblical theology is all through successfully maintained. It is interesting to see the range of sources used, and to find once again (as so often with English authors on these subjects) an almost complete neglect of the work of Catholics. Thus, for example Scott's *Hermetica* is effectively cited, but there is no reference to the very considerable recent work of Festugière. While we can learn an immense amount from this book, still there remains a sense of deficiency; a suspicion dawns that biblical theology necessarily pre-supposes theology in the great and classic sense understood in the Church. It is indeed difficult for a Catholic to enter profoundly into the theology of St John without the illuminating pronouncements of the Church on Baptism, for example (John iii, 5), or Penance (John xx, 22), or the Petrine Primacy (John xxi, 15-18). The Church ever remains the necessary background and medium of understanding.

A further example of the contemporary emphasis on biblical theology is *The New Testament Against its Environment*, which is successful

in its use and presentation of scholars' work to a wider circle of thoughtful readers. Very characteristically the author has striven 'to lay hold of that common and vital content of the entire New Testament'. He terms this 'The Gospel of Christ the Risen Lord', and develops it in three moments; first, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (II Cor. i, 3, etc.). This might usefully have been linked with John xx, 17. Then, 'The Fulness of Time', which owes much to Cullman's *Christ and Time*. Finally, 'Led by the Spirit', which shows something of the solid biblical basis of what the Catholic means when he declares that the Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Church. An allied publication, *The Old Testament Against its Environment*, which has similar qualities, seeks to see the Old Testament as a whole, and is absorbingly interesting.

Of quite another calibre is Dr Matthews' essay on the Incarnation, *The Problem of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, being the Maurice Lectures delivered at King's College, London, in 1949. The Dean of St Paul's 'found that there was one subject on which I wished to speak, that of the Person of Christ', and that much current theology of the Incarnation neglects to face 'the new situation which biblical criticism and modern psychology have created'. The reading of these four essays is an intellectual joy and exercise, and leaves us quite unconvinced. The 'new situation' in biblical criticism seemingly turns upon such debatable matter as 'the Christ of St John' as opposed to 'the Christ of the Synoptics', etc. And finally we come to the characteristic weakness of so much contemporary religious reflection. The Catholic, by contrast, knows that his faith does not rest on the assured results of biblical criticism any more than on the uncritical assumptions of the credulous. Theology and theologians *have* new problems and questions; but criticism, for the Catholic, serves but to enhance the beauty and depth of the eternally significant. Nor is it at all obvious that the new psychology has rendered effete our classic theology; at most it would make theologians advert to new problems of absorbing interest. Thus for example 'Libido', in whatever sense we take it (and psychologists notoriously diverge here), is surely compatible with the utter sinlessness of our Lord. The forceful words of St Thomas can be applied here.¹ For these and like reasons, the Dean of St Paul's essays are fascinating, but as suggested lines of speculation they are, for the most part, unacceptable.

¹ cf. IIIa V, 2, ad 2. *Caro et sanguis accipiuntur . . . pro corruptione carnis et sanguinis. Quae quidem in Christo non fuit quantum ad culpam. Fuit tamen ad tempus quantum ad poenam, ut opus nostrae redemptionis expleret.* (Flesh and blood are taken here for the corruption of flesh; which was not in Christ as far as it was sinful (*culpa*), but as far as it was punishment (*poena*); thus for a time, it was in Christ, that he might carry through the work of our redemption.) Modern psychologists, however, seem unable to distinguish between *poena* and *culpa*, or the evil which we suffer and that which we do.

Valuable for the careful student is Dr Lightfoot's *The Gospel of St Mark*. Here again are put together a number of lectures and articles, each of which deserves study, text in hand. The chapter on 'Form Criticism and the study of the Gospels' shows well how form-criticism is 'the logical issue of that gospel study which immediately preceded it'. It is certainly true that form-criticism has been a stimulus, and though the basis upon which the theory rests are untenable, still the lessons learnt from it can but vivify both our understanding and exposition of the gospels. 'But the chief gain to religion . . . will come through the emphasis of the new study on the vital connection between the little sections, including the teaching, of the gospels, and the great fundamental, permanent gospel themes of vocation, physical and spiritual restoration, life and death, love and hate, judgment and salvation'. (p. 105.)

ROLAND D. POTTER, O.P.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. By J. N. Sanders. (Black; 10s. 6d.)

THE CONFLICT OF THE KINGDOMS. By C. T. Chapman. (Hutchinson's University Library; 7s. 6d.)

CHRIST AND TIME. By Oscar Cullmann. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

Canon Raven has recently pointed out that the Liberal Tradition in English Theology is a very different thing from the naturalistic Liberalism of the Continent. The difference lies in that sense of the historic character of the Christian Revelation, which, together with a conviction that the faith is reasonable, has marked English theological writing. This is not to say that there have not been subsidiary trends, one of which has a markedly secular tone and can be traced back to Locke and Toland, if not further. For this school, of whom the Modern Churchmen are the contemporary representatives, religion must be reasonable, in the sense that it must not be mysterious. It was to safeguard this principle that the Liberal theologian sought for the Christ of history, as distinct from the Christ of the Gospel narratives. The chief merit of Mr Sanders' book is that it gives a popular proof that the extreme Liberal viewpoint as expressed by Dr Barnes depends on preconceptions drawn from a dubious philosophy. The rest of the book consists of an exposition of views made familiar by Hoskyns and Dodds.

Dr Chapman's book is very typical of the progressive post-Liberal outlook. It begins, as is inevitable nowadays, with some comparative religion, and ends with a reference to the teaching of C. G. Jung. It betrays the influence of Barth in its sense of the dramatic in Revelation, and of the Liberal in its desire to find a contemporary language. It is