

We are reminded about the conflict of non-Catholic opinions about the author: that it was written by a Greek thinker for Greeks, and marks the hellenization of the Christian faith; that on the contrary the gospel is thoroughly Jewish and Palestinian in tone; that it is historical and written by an eye-witness of the events; that it is purely imaginary and symbolical in character and written long after St John's death; and so on *ad infinitum*. The author ends the discussion, very unsatisfactorily, by adding to the confusion in offering his own hypothesis, for which he admits that he can furnish no proofs, namely that the Apocalypse, the three Epistles and the Gospel of St John were none of them written by the apostle but by his disciples somewhere between A.D. 90 and 140. Introductions should always be read last!

R.G.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPELS. Edited by D. E. Nineham. (Blackwell; 60s.)

A heterogeneous collection of essays written by former pupils and admirers of the late R. H. Lightfoot, the biblical scholar who died in 1953. It consists of an introductory memoir of Lightfoot and a dozen essays ranging over the whole field of Gospel study, but with no common theme or argument. What witnesses to the widespread admiration and influence of the man in whose memory these studies were written is the fact that their authors are representative of so many centres of learning—Oxford, Cambridge, London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Aberdeen Universities. The source of this admiration and influence may perhaps be seen in the intimate description given of him in the memoir—a shy, reticent and diffident scholar, but very painstaking and sincere, who strangely enough became convinced that he had an important contribution to make to the world of biblical scholarship. This conviction sprang from his discovery of the German school of Gospel interpretation known as the *Formgeschichte* or form-critical school. Lightfoot strove to popularize the conclusions of these scholars in his Bampton lectures of 1934, later published in his *History and Interpretation of the Gospels*.

R.G.

ISLAM: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition.
By G. E. von Grunebaum. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 21s.).

This book is introduced to us in a foreword by Robert Redfield and Milton Singer—presumably colleagues of Mr Grunebaum on the teaching staff of the University of Chicago. They inform us, rather cryptically, that it appears 'under anthropological auspices', not elsewhere apparent, since it reveals few, if any, traces of any real approximation to the outlook of the social scientist or the cultural anthro-

pologist. The author shows himself to be a man of wide reading and research into everything related to Islamic civilization, but nothing in his book reveals any examination of local or individual cultural phenomena. In fact, as a study of Moslem culture, it may be said to be, above all, the history of a bygone age. The brilliant cultural efflorescence of the Abbasid era was irretrievably shattered by the Mongol invasion. Thereafter, the cultures that arose were of a national character, first in Persia, and in the Persian language, and then in the Ottoman Empire, where the nascent literature was helped into life by Persian midwifery. The modern literary renaissance in Egypt and Syria is inspired from sources which have little to do with Islam as such.

Even in the great days of the Abbasids, the chief authors of the great sprouting of hitherto unsuspected genius were Persians using Arabic as a cultural language and raising it to higher capacities in the process. As to the Arabs themselves, in the 'heartlands' of Arabia and the 'Völkerchaos' of North Africa, one would search in vain for any considerable output of literary or scientific work—and that is putting it mildly. Our author himself, indeed, makes it quite clear that Islam as such tends rather to discourage any free career on the part of the creative intelligence. All true knowledge emanates from God himself. The part played by secondary intellects consists mainly in debasing the divine currency.

However, in the course of his researches into the cultural history of Islamic countries, Professor Grunebaum makes many acute and penetrating observations, the fruit of his ardent studies and assiduous reflection on the problems they have brought to light. It deserves to be read and could be wholeheartedly recommended were it not for its two besetting faults: an excess of airy generalizations, and, more damaging still, a style which is not adequate to so important a subject. The dedication, 'For Giselle', at once strikes this, for a serious Orientalist, somewhat flippant note, and one cannot but deplore, throughout the book, a style which is alarmingly involved and faintly irresponsible. From a number of indications, one might imagine the author to be not very familiar with the English language. In transcriptions from Arabic, the letter 'ain is represented in this book by a sort of halved bracket, instead of the usual apostrophe. In a matter of translation, Professor Grunebaum gives 'community duty' for 'fard al kifâya' (page 122, No. 14). No doubt this is what the term ultimately amounts to, but in itself, it applies to a religious duty which may be said to have been performed if a *sufficient number* of people, not necessarily all, engage on it.

Lastly, we are grateful for a very useful index.

CYPRIAN RICE, O.P.