

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY: EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN ITS JEWISH SETTING by Morna D. Hooker. *Epworth Press*. 1986. pp. iv + 76. £3.95.

In her Preface Professor Hooker presents these four Sanderson Lectures as they were delivered at the Theological Hall of the Uniting Church in Ormond College, Melbourne, 'as a foretaste of the book' she hopes 'eventually to write.' She must keep that promise, but in the meantime these fresh and provocative lectures could be invaluable for introducing new theological students to study of the New Testament.

Professor Hooker is less than happy with the present willingness of some to explore the biblical evidence 'without asking questions about the original author's intentions or situation'. For 'if we wish to discover what our biblical writers meant ... and what those for whom they wrote understood by them, then we must do our best to comprehend their world...' Although 'it is probably a mistake to play off "Greek" against "Hebrew"' the intention is to explore the formative influence played on the gospel by its Jewish context, '... and 'to examine the tensions between the old and new faiths...'

It is certainly clear that the earliest Christians included those faithful not only to synagogue but also to Temple. If with more real honesty than we can usually summon we put ourselves in their place, we may begin to see such strange truths as that the notion of Christ as the replacement of Jewish sacrifices was 'the result of being cut off from those sacrifices, rather than vice versa.' But of course the figure of Jesus was a new factor which, demanding explanation, raised the whole issue of continuity—discontinuity. In this connection, the evangelists' use of the 'new wine, old or new wineskins' complex of sayings is shown to be far from clear, reflecting different applications at different stages, at some claiming continuity, at others accepting or asserting discontinuity. What Jesus himself said is hard to discover. The 'criterion of dissimilarity' will not do; the situation is too complicated for that. (In any case it removes much that Judaism, Jesus himself, and the early church taught in common.)

Indeed, the discovery that we may rejoice to have much in common is gathering momentum. Well made here is the point that Stephen's speech should be understood less as an attack on the Law and the Temple than as part of 'an ongoing debate between Jews and Christians as to which of them are truly faithful to God...'. This surely is the main burden of Paul's speeches in Acts, but it is in the sphere of Paul's own letters that Hooker shows how easily we forget that 'we' is often 'we Jews'. When New Testament authors traced continuity with the past, however, paramount for them was the way they began by looking back from the glorious fact of the risen Jesus to find Old Testament passages which would fit the splendid reality.

The last lecture looks at the relation of the Law to Christ. It is insufficient to say, the Law witnesses to him, he replaces it. The Law is perfect, therefore something more than an equal perfection must account for Christ's superiority. The answer lies in the realm of understanding how the Law is embodied in Jesus so that he is the way, truth and life; and how as the perfect sacrifice he paradoxically becomes at once its fulfilment and release from its bondage.

A valuable and stimulating book.

A.R.C. LEANEY

EVELYN WAUGH: THE EARLY YEARS 1903 — 39 by Martin Stannard. *Dent*, 1986. Pp xiv + 537. £14.95.

This is a lucid, thorough and compassionate biography that traces Waugh's life from the seclusion of early childhood through the tangle of his university years, the frantic rounds and travels from which the early novels and articles emerged, to reveal Waugh's own search for order and sense. Stannard draws with acumen on letters, diaries and interviews to build up a portrait which should finally dismiss superficial but lasting labels of Waugh as a 'fascist' or as a writer with no serious artistic intent. At Lancing in 1920 he was advising Dudley Carew to 'avoid any conversations on general subjects' in novels: 'Don't put down thoughts at such length. Directly suggest—be subtle, leave something to us readers' (p. 61). Stannard makes