

THE NEW TESTAMENT ('Knowing Christianity' Series), by A. R. C. Leaney. *Hodder and Stoughton*, London, 1972. 256 pp. £1.50.

The Professor of Theology at Nottingham tells us that his book is 'not primarily an introduction to the study of the New Testament; it is intended rather to be a description, so that the reader can discover what the books of the New Testament are about as well as the problems connected with discovering their origin'. I take it that Professor Leaney means that he is as interested in stopping the theological gaps in the education of the unbelieving reader who wishes only to be well-informed as in showing the believer how to prepare for lifelong immersion in the New Testament. No one can quarrel with such an aim, though I feel that the word 'description' does not prepare the reader for the large scope given to subjective judgment at several points in the book.

In the first third of his work Professor Leaney treats of the synoptics, concentrating on an informative account of form-criticism, authorship and dates of composition. One is aware here of a deafening silence about Redaction Criticism. Perhaps Professor Leaney would think that a discussion of theological tendencies belongs rather to the genre of Introduction, but if an outline of the main lines of the thought of St Paul is relevant in part 2, why is not an outline of the thought of Matthew or Luke relevant here? The synoptic section is rounded off by a well-balanced chapter on 'the Historical Jesus' which issues in the moderate conclusion that 'the Jesus of history is not essentially different from the Christ of faith' (a total discontinuity between history and kerygma is implausible; such details as the transfiguration and the nature miracles are 'impossible to accept'—for reasons that are not spelled out there are clues that it may have something to do with the laws of nature—but the main drift of the Marcan account may be accepted).

The second part, devoted to the Pauline corpus, provides what seems to me an excellent guide to the life and work of Paul and to the

date, purpose, authorship and destination of the letters attributed to him.

The final, miscellaneous, part (on John, Hebrews, Catholics, Revelation, Formation of New Testament, and Relevance of New Testament studies) is the weakest. I am in particular unhappy about the way the Fourth Gospel fares. Granted that 'to characterize the gospel in a short compass is very hard' (p. 167), and granted that Professor Leaney does allow it to be 'a work of genius' (p. 173), I think he rather undervalues it. For instance, on the question of historicity, the general reader no doubt needs to be given the reasons why the great majority of scholars believe the gospel cannot be accepted as a straightforward eyewitness account (as was once believed), but would it not be fair also to mention some of the reasons which persuade Dodd, Brown and others that *nevertheless* it contains, through an independent historical tradition, some genuine historical recollections, e.g. in the Trial account, absent from the synoptics, rather than leave the impression that the gospel is perhaps an inspired exercise in theologically motivated fiction? Perhaps this impression is not intended, but Professor Leaney invites it when he asks: 'How can one admire, and love, how can one even like' the Jesus of the fourth gospel, and explains that it is not necessary to try because the gospel purveys 'the teaching and deeds not of an actual historical man but of the Logos incarnate'? The essay on the relevance of New Testament studies is likewise marred by unfortunate ways of putting things, which would make one cautious in recommending the book, as when the eschatological thought of 2 Peter, Albert Schweitzer and C. H. Dodd incur the judgment 'they all suffer from acute dishonesty, albeit often unconscious'!

The printer has jumbled up some page numbers in the list of contents (p. 13).

BERNARD ROBINSON

HEROD ANTIPAS, by Harold W. Hoehner, *C.U.P.*, Cambridge, 1972. 436 pp. £7.00.

At once scholarly and readable, this study of Herod Antipas fills a gap in New Testament background studies, and is in part a serious contribution to the exegesis of several Gospel passages. Scholarly, because the apparatus of

notes, indices, appendices, can scarcely be faulted; readable, because all is clearly written, and from time to time we are provided with little summaries or conclusions, giving us, as it were, a breathing space in the reading of

a dense volume. After treating of Antipas' youth, we are given a full account of his territories, their inhabitants and the economics of Antipas' realm. Then the early years are surveyed, how Antipas, Herod-like, built Sepphoris, Livias, and Tiberias, how he came to his kingdom without ever being styled 'king'. Unlike his father he negotiated peaceably to secure his hold on the territories allotted to him by Rome. Then come the main studies on Antipas and John Baptist, Antipas and Pilate, Antipas and Jesus. This last is no doubt the heart of this book, even if there is relative paucity of matter. There is a full discussion of certain key texts (Mark 6, 14-16; 8, 15; Luke 13, 31-33), and copious notes.

A final section tells of Antipas' last years ending in exile in Gaul or Spain. Nothing is said about his death—just that he passes out of history, which perhaps is a form of death for

some people.

There are some simplicities. Thus on page 85 Joseph 'the carpenter' (yet *tekton* is not certainly carpenter) may have helped in the construction of the Sepphoris, and, we are told, 'it may be that Jesus himself helped in the later stages'. A nice idea: but guess-work. On page 192 is a geographical puzzle which is insoluble ('Capernaum which is only ten miles from the coast of the Sea of Galilee', *sic*). As for John Baptist being executed at Tiberias, the Gospel texts do not demand this, and for once we can go with Josephus who speaks of Machaerus. On pages 169, and 206, note 6, we are told of green grass pointing to Passover time or spring but green grass depends on the rain which can obtain some time before.

Yet these are small blemishes in a work of lasting value.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

THE GO-BETWEEN GOD, by John V. Taylor. S.C.M. 1972. 246 pp. £1.95.

This is a heart-warming indeed, heart-expanding book by the General Secretary of the (Anglican) Church Missionary Society, on the Holy Spirit, the 'lovable go-between'. It is really a collection of meditations, rather than a straightforward thesis, and the over-all impression that I, at any rate, have at the end of the book, is not so much that something has been said, as that I have been introduced to someone afresh. For Taylor the Spirit is the eye-opener, the one who discloses people to each other, who turns It's into Thou's; and in this, surely most authentic, sense, this book is real 'spiritual reading'.

And the person we meet is one who is limitlessly free; indeed, one who cannot help but burst out of bonds, in a sheer ecstasy of being alive. For he is Life. And the vision he brings to us, once and for all, but also day by day, is total. Taylor points to the activity of the Holy Spirit in all manner of different human situations: boy meets girl, to Christian meets Hindu, to Protestant meets Pentecostal. The setting is intensely human, even humanistic; yet there is no reduction of the gospel to the merely human (what Taylor rather nicely calls 'spiritual flat-earthism'). However obscurely, it is always Jesus to whom the Spirit points; and however much the Spirit of Jesus is also the universal Spirit, yet the actual confrontation with Jesus is always a crisis, always a judgment, always a death and resurrection. The succeeding chapters lead us through the various

different human situations, always sympathetically, often with brilliant flashes of illuminating wisdom, until finally we come out to pure adoration. 'And charity comes from adoration.'

There is an ease of diction, throwing up repeated *bons mots* (such as this: 'our need is not for more wonders but for more wonder'), yet there is also a sureness and ruthlessness of argument. We are never allowed to forget for long that the Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy, showing us simultaneously what is and what might be, with all the pain and terror that entails. Taylor explodes an amazing number of easy evasions, ancient and modern, determined, with the determination of the Spirit himself, to drive us out into freedom if we will only open our eyes and see. We are not to be complacent about the Church; fair enough, but then comes a marvellous section explaining how mistaken was our disillusion with the Church, how far it rested on entirely spurious expectations, and how easy it is, a *propos* of the Church, to fall into the old attitude: 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'. But we must not stop there either! Granted that the Church *must* be a failure, yet we can never accept the failure of the Church. . . .

This is but one instance. From one point of view, this is a kind of one-man Council of Trent, offering us a whole view of new Christian vitality, which cannot but show up, and must tell us that it shows up, all the shoddy trendy substitutes for hard thinking and