

result is a considerable toning down of the syncretist impression.

Indeed, the author is anxious to avoid any too facile evolutionary interpretation because of a humanist distrust of any view of mental development which would look for explanations outside man himself. 'The motivating force remains, after all, man' (p. 13); 'It (the gradual development of the myth) is a process which begins with man and continues with him' (p. 193). Yet Mr Weisinger's attitude to the myths of rebirth is not simply pragmatist; elsewhere he speaks of a rational world order in which human suffering finds its place. One is driven to the conclusion that his point of view remains imperfectly defined, oscillating between a modish existentialism (man makes his own choices: even if they are wrong he must make them) and an urge to contribute to the contemporary industry of tracing culture patterns.

It is not till the sixth and final chapter that we reach the discussion of tragedy proper. It is maintained that while an age of faith believes too surely in its myths to invest man with the freedom of choice implicit in tragedy, an atmosphere of scepticism is inimical to tragedy in a different fashion by converting everything to 'the objective formality of art'. Only in a state of mind between the two, when religious faith is becoming conscious of the pressure of new ideas, can the fundamental questions of tragedy be asked. The essential tragic note is 'the small moment of doubt or indecision', found in the ritual pattern too, before the god or the hero makes his choice. This is the fascinating core of Mr Weisinger's argument; we may regret that his historical approach, which sees scepticism as a particular climate of opinion, ignores the type of scepticism which anyone at any time may apply to the data of his experience, and which may be the prelude to faith.

Because of its devious argument, and abortive attempt to bridge the gap between the historical and the critical, this is not a successful book; however, a failure so gallant and at such a level of difficulty, has rewards to offer the reader.

ROGER SHARROCK

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL. By C. H. Dodd.  
(Cambridge University Press; 42s.)

This book, the result of much study and thought, is one more sign of the lasting fascination which the Fourth Gospel has for those Christians who have decided that it is not the Apostle's work, and that its contents are largely fiction. Dr Dodd here endeavours to prove that the chief purpose of the author (whoever he was) was to recommend the truth of the Incarnation to the same sort of Hellenistic-Jewish circles for whom Philo had written his books—circles in which more or less knowledge of Judaism was combined with a mixed Stoic-Platonic philosophy. In this

philosophy itself and in the Jewish variation of it Dr Dodd finds a genuine mysticism, to which the gospel writer was able to appeal, being familiar with both its ideas and its language. For himself, however, these ideas and words had taken a deeper meaning from his Christian faith. While still remaining intelligible to the non-Christian reader, they were now used as vehicles of Christian truth, and to a believer would convey the full Christian sense. For instance, in the discourse on the Bread of Life (ch. v) a Christian would not see *that*, but would eventually be brought so far as to see that some form of union between the disciple and Christ was meant, without understanding the mode of establishing it (pp. 233-4). In short the author is applying, in one particular way, St Paul's principle of making himself all things to all men. The gospel approaches much nearer than the Synoptic Gospels do to the standpoint of the apologetic writings of the next century and especially of the Alexandrian ones. Indeed the term 'Alexandrian gospel' suggests itself naturally to the mind as one reads Dr Dodd's book.

Some writers on the Fourth Gospel have no doubt over-stressed its Jewish character, and have practically refused to admit any literary influences except purely Palestinian ones. Is not Dr Dodd going too far in the other direction, and exaggerating the Hellenistic influences? There certainly seem to be passages (especially the prologue) where the author approaches the language and ideas of Philo, but does not the book remain much more Jewish than Hellenistic? The prologue is followed by some sixty verses of narrative where we are very definitely in the atmosphere of Palestinian villages and towns. The book includes several most interesting studies of spiritual documents of the time, especially the Hermetic writings and Philo, and some very valuable chapters on the the history and use of a dozen vital terms ('truth', 'spirit', 'Messiah', etc.) where Dr Dodd's scrupulous fairness and candour are as conspicuous as his learning. In conclusion I can by no means agree that our final judgment on the spiritual value of a gospel can be independent of the question of authorship. The writer claims to be an Apostle, relating historical facts. If he was no Apostle and invented many of his stories, the only name for him is impostor, and it is idle to talk about his spiritual greatness. A mystic who tells lies is a failure as mystic.

W. REES

**OBEDIENCE.** (Blackfriars Publications; 16s. 6d.)

The problems arising in connection with religious obedience are not too difficult to state, but much more difficult to resolve. This work is the third volume in the series '*Religious Life*' translated from the French and the result of conferences convened for the assistance of religious. One would be prepared to say that they are as authoritative as the people who