

REVIEWS

THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN. By Rudolph Otto. Trans. from the Revised German Edition by Floyd V. Filson and Bertram Lee Woolf. (The Lutterworth Press; 15s.)

It is very disappointing that this, the last work of one whose writings have achieved a great deal for the cause of religion, should contain very little that a Catholic can approve of, unless as a partial antidote to certain views still more unacceptable than his own (certain crude Liberalistic and certain subtle Calvinistic views) which the author has the merit of attacking quite strenuously.

His constructive purpose is to expound his disagreement with the version which the New Testament presents of the teaching and the character of Christ, to replace it with another which he can scientifically guarantee. Briefly the procedure has been as follows: first, by force of intuition aided by literary criticism, to break through the inconsistencies and misrenderings of the inspired record to discover an inner curve or stratum of genuine information, and so to arrive at a provisional estimate of the Christian reality; and next, to cast about in circumambient history to find what may confirm and implement his hypothesis. This casting about lead in fact to the discovery of a certain Type of religious character or vocation and also of a certain Type of religious thought which seemed to the author to fit his New Testament findings quite exactly; it then remained but to check and work up his data on the model of these Types. For the construction of the character of Christ he found the mould, namely, of the Prophetic-Charismatic Type—about which no more need here be said. And as mould for his reconstruction of the Gospel message he found a grandiose Type of doctrine, the history and formation of which consists in a fusion of the Hebrew religion with a certain powerful stream of Aryan-Iranian eschatological doctrine. The perfect expression of this Type is discovered in the Apocalypse of Enoch. That book then, as supplemented by Isaias chapter 53, becomes the key to the sound and central understanding of Christ and of his teaching, the means of correcting the Christology and Eschatology which the New Testament would impose on the gullible reader.

This Iranian-Enochian source theory is not new. Whether it is sound or not precisely as a source theory, certainly it presents material that is of great value for a deeper appreciation of the

New Testament. What must be entirely repudiated is the use to which it is put by Dr. Otto, who would make of it an interpretative principle in frank rivalry to the finished religious interpretation that the New Testament offers. But, application apart, his line of argument for the very existence of such an influence is not convincing. He shows a lack of subtlety, and still more a lack of realistic historical sense. His method is that of *la science livresque*. And even within the bookish bounds to which he keeps, his argument is defective: for example, not a word said to counter the strongly held view that the Enochian passages upon which he largely depends are in fact Christian interpolations, and not a word of critical defence of his use of the famous "Thou art the Son of Man."

At the other end of his line of investigation, the same exclusively pedantic method is employed. There is no room to give details. One can only suggest that if instead of concentrating as he does upon a piecemeal textual criticism Dr. Otto had set his candid and generous mind to ponder the doctrine of the New Testament as a living whole he would have found that the Catholic doctrines of the Divinity of Christ, of the Incarnation, of the Church have not—as he imagines—overlaid or blurred the truths for which he is concerned; he would have found those same truths safely contained within a majestic synthesis which for the rest does not exclude but takes in its glorious stride whatever may be sound in his fussy departmental Iranian-Enochian hypothesis.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

CHRISTIAN MORAL CONDUCT. By A. E. Garvie, D.D. (John Heritage, The Unicorn Press; 3s. 6d.)

There is a plausible fear that moral conduct traditionally taught by Christianity must undergo certain changes in the light of modern knowledge, and especially of the new psychology. But this fear proves to be empty when it is shown that, having repudiated the conclusions which are in themselves inadmissible, Christian morality easily assimilates within itself those which are valid. Such is the conviction of Dr. Garvie, which this book has been written to spread. The tenor is thus apologetic, but less by a systematic depreciation of tenets other than his own, than by putting in relief the value of Christian morality. The author insists chiefly on this, that Christianity is a moral religion; that if it call for faith, yet in no way does it dispense with good works; and that Christian moral conduct builds on the natural equipment of man, and this last idea is worked out in relation to the moral life of the individual, the family, and the commu-