

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