

large print contains more food for meditation than many elaborate productions specially designed for that purpose.

HILDA GRAEF

THE FAITH OF ISRAEL. By H. H. Rowley. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

Mr James Sprunt of Wilmington, N.C., who endowed the James Sprunt lectures at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va., in 1911, has put us greatly in his debt. For it was on this foundation that Dr Rowley in 1955 delivered the lectures which comprise this book.

If a comparison may be permitted between chalk and cheese—namely, this collection of seven lectures and a massive and detailed classic in two volumes—there is a quality about Dr Rowley's lectures which recalls Pedersen's *Israel*. I trust neither of these distinguished scholars would be offended by a comparison which, however divergent their views on the Old Testament may be, is meant to do honour to them both. The large comprehensiveness of mind, the sober avoidance of over-simplified solutions and generalizations which mark the work of each, are qualities not so universal in the learned world as to be undeserving of mention.

In one respect Dr Rowley's book is superior to Hr Pedersen's. His theological approach enables him to give a form and unity to his subject which is wanting in the great work of the other. But you cannot judge a work of anthropology, which is what *Israel* really is, by a standard made to measure theology. Granted; but the fact remains, and needs emphasis, that it is theology and theology alone which can perceive and bring out the essential unity of the Holy Scriptures. And so good theology on the Bible, just because it is theology, penetrates more deeply into the heart of its subject than even the best biblical anthropology.

And Dr Rowley's is good theology. Although his terms do not always correspond to the language of Catholic theology, the ideas they express seem to belong to the central line of Christian orthodoxy on these matters. It is his conception of revelation and its media that holds his book together; what distinguishes the revelation made in the Scriptures from the claims and concepts of revelation found in other religions, he says, is the combination of historical and personal factors dovetailing into each other, it is revelation through a complex of prophetic personality and historical event.

There is one point on which I would disagree with the author. He points out that there are a number of religious ideas and practices mentioned in the Bible which belong to Israel's primitive past or common Semitic background, but which neither characterized nor found a permanent place in Israel's distinctive religion—polygamy, for

example, or the 'devoting' of enemy peoples to utter destruction with Jericho and the Amalekites. For a history of Israelite religion, he says, such things demand full consideration; but for an Old Testament theology all that is not of the essence of the faith of Israel is irrelevant. There, I think, Dr Rowley is not doing justice to his native breadth of mind. That such things are secondary, of minor importance, no concern of such a course of lectures as this, is true enough. But that anything in the Scriptures should be called *irrelevant* to theology I find unacceptable. We must indeed be prepared never to be able to see the relevance of large tracts of the Bible, but that does not oblige us to deny it. And Dr Rowley would agree, I believe, that the very fact of Israel's faith in addition to its unique and distinctive essence, having so much in common with the religions of other nations and being rooted indeed in the general religious awareness of mankind, is something of immense theological importance—at any rate to the believer who is not a Jew but a Gentile.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

PLATO AND THE CHRISTIANS. Passages from the writings of Plato selected and translated with an introduction by Adam Fox. (S.C.M. Press 21s.)

At the first glance this little book by the Archdeacon of Westminster seems rather too simple-minded to make any worthwhile contribution to the understanding of Plato's influence on the minds of Christians in the past or his importance for them in the present. This impression is created partly by the little Scriptural texts at the head of each extract which do not always fit very well, and partly by the choice of extracts some of which seem to be rather violently torn from their context and used without any consciousness of the formidable philosophical and theological problems which any attempt to bring them into contact with Christianity would raise if their probable real significance was understood. But this impression is deceptive, and when one reads the book a little more carefully one discovers that Canon Fox has done what he set out to do excellently, and that it was well worth doing. It is certainly not a book intended for professional philosophers or theologians (though some of them might profit by reading it). It is intended to show the ordinary Christian why Christians through the ages have found Plato interesting and important: and the passages chosen are those which would strike such an ordinary Christian reading through the Dialogues as having something to do in some way with his religion; the texts are simply meant to indicate why he might reasonably feel this. And all the passages of the greatest philosophical and theological importance are there (the great argument for the