

REVIEWS

THE POWERS THAT BE. By Clinton D. Morrison. (S.C.M. Press; 9s. 6d.)

NEWLY DISCOVERED Gnostic WRITINGS. By W. C. van Unnik. (S.C.M. Press; 7s. 6d.)

The great question of the epistle to the Romans is so obviously the problem of justification that the concluding sections of exhortation tend to go by default: the simplest and most evident sense is accepted without the detailed scrutiny that is given to practically every word in the first half. This is true of the phrase: 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers'; this is taken quite naturally as a reminder of the duty of civil obedience.

But this is not the only possible meaning of the phrase. Elsewhere the word 'powers' is used of angelic beings, as in the formula 'thrones, dominations and powers'. Thus, there is room to ask whether Paul in this text has in mind the role of such angelic beings in the government of the world.

It is this interpretation that Morrison undertakes to expound, discuss and defend in a volume of the S.C.M. *Studies in Biblical Theology*. The work reads rather like a thesis—perhaps that is inevitable when such concentrated attention is given to such a specific point. Thus, his main point is made almost too clear, so carefully is it expounded. There is also the rather laboured stress on what is surely a fairly evident principle of hermeneutics, that great care must be taken to see what a term meant in the mind of the author and his readers (the distinction between what Paul is *imparting* and what he is *communicating* is urged to the point of boredom).

But this treatment has also its corresponding advantages. The bibliographical information is rich (though the author clearly seems to be more at home with German than with French). The arguments against his thesis are presented just as fully as the case for it. And most of all, the author has time at least to suggest the relevance of the discussion to the Christian life: for it does concern the most fundamental doctrine of the early Church—that Jesus is Lord; and it should therefore concern every Christian—it is a question of our life in the world. And it is this, even more than the actual exegesis of Romans xiii, 1-7, and even more than the arguments which the author brings to bear, which makes the book interesting and valuable.

The newly discovered documents at Nag Hammadi have given a new impetus to the study of gnosticism. Since these documents are as important in their way as the Dead Sea scrolls, it is important to have some clear idea of their nature and importance; and this service is

excellently performed by the second of the books here reviewed. Its most striking feature is the brief but admirably lucid exposition of gnosticism, in which the author manages to impose order on what is almost inevitably a confused subject.

Then he deals with the account of the discoveries at Nag Hammadi; and finally he deals with four of the documents found there. He attempts to situate each in the general picture of gnosticism; he deals with the date, the contents, the doctrine it expounds, the problems it answers and others which it raises. It is some indication of the problems which scholars have yet to face that the last book he deals with, the still unpublished *Apocryphon of James*, does not seem to be a gnostic work at all—though forming part of an undoubtedly gnostic collection.

The conclusion indicates the importance of these heterodox works for our study of Christian theology. It is a most useful little book; and a special remark may be made of the translation, which is pleasant and clear throughout.

L. JOHNSTON

ONE FOLD: Essays and Documents to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Chair of Unity Octave. Edited by Edward F. Hanahoe and Titus Cranny of the Society of the Atonement. (Chair of Unity Apostolate, Graymoor, Garrison, New York; \$6.50.)

APPROACHES TO CHRISTIAN UNITY. By C. J. Dumont, O.P., being a translation of *Vers l'Unité Chrétienne*, with Introduction by Henry St John, O.P. (Darton, Longman and Todd; 25s.)

In 1908 Paul Francis Wattson, an American Episcopalian clergyman, initiated, on the other side of the Atlantic, the eight days of prayer for Christian unity. Two years later, along with the religious family of which he was the founder, he entered the Catholic Church. In the future their main work was to be for the union of Christendom under the successor of St Peter.

This volume of essays contains an abundant and useful documentation. There is an account of the Friars of the Atonement and their founder, a full discussion, well documented, on the proper interpretation of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* and the full story of the Roman condemnation, in the mid-nineteenth century, of the unfortunate Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom. There is an account of the various Oriental Churches and their rites which will be useful for reference, while the essay by Fr Charles Boyer, S.J., gives a very good account of the growth, in the non-Catholic world, of the ecumenical movement and of the Catholic attitude towards it. A very long essay by one of the editors, *Vestigia Ecclesiae*, ends the work. This is rather hard reading, while the relevance of some