

given to its members by an institute he mentions the doctrinal: this could be emphasized; the further an individual member is from a detailed rule and an ever-present structure, the greater is the necessity that he should possess a sane and strong theology, deeply held and deeply understood.

Mlle Goichon, a member of the third order of St Dominic, evidently possesses such a formation though her rather Sibylline writing does not always do it justice. The theological portions of her book could be briefer and clearer. She is not in fact writing for members of a secular institute but for all those who wish to lead a contemplative life in the world. Much however of what she says, especially in the third chapter, on the conditions and the means of such a life, will be of considerable value to members of those institutes which lay stress on a contemplative side to their vocation. Here, where she is plainly speaking from experience, an experience meditated on in the light of scripture and theology, she carries conviction, both in regard to the possibility of such a life (the difficulties are only short of unsurmountable), its value in itself to the Church, the re-assessment of traditional means involved and practical suggestions for its organization. She draws often on St Thérèse of Lisieux for spiritual advice; it seems strange that she does not once mention Sister Elisabeth of the Trinity, whose simplicity of prayer one would suppose to be of almost equal value to those whose time is likely to be narrowly limited.

The first two books are paper-backed and should not be too expensive: the third is too expensive and could be paper-backed, it would then be cheaper and the good things in it available to more people.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

A NEW QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS. By James M. Robinson. (S.C.M. Press; 9s. 6d.)

The expression 'The quest of the historical Jesus' has become familiar to us as the English title of Albert Schweitzer's book, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*. Schweitzer was concerned with the problem 'What can be known of Jesus of Nazareth by means of the scientific methods of the historian?' 'The so-called historical Jesus of the nineteenth-century biographies is really a modernization, in which Jesus is painted in the colours of modern *bourgeois* respectability and neo-Kantian moralism', wrote Schweitzer, and forthwith presented us with a reconstruction of Jesus which he regarded as objective simply because it lacked the Victorianism of the classic lives of Christ.

In reaction against this positivist approach to the new testament, the existentialist school, of which Bultmann is the leader, regards the

actuality of history as consisting not in names, places, dates, occurrences, sequences, causes, effects, but in 'the distinctively human, creative, unique, purposeful, which distinguishes man from nature. The dimension in which man actually exists, his "world", the stance or outlook from which he acts, his understanding of his existence behind what he does, the way he meets his basic problems and the answer his life implies to the human dilemma, the significance he had as the environment of those who knew him, the continuing history his life produces, the possibility of existence which his life presents to me as an alternative—such matters as these have become central in an attempt to understand history' (pp. 28-29 of this book).

It is this deeper level of the reality of 'Jesus of Nazareth as he actually was' that the *new* quest advocated in this book is intended to discover. There are two ways of arriving at it, first through the *kerygma*,¹ and secondly through the non-kerygmatic material in the new testament which can reasonably be supposed to go back to Jesus himself. In relatively simple terms the *kerygma* may be defined as the proclamation by the community of its interpretation of the eschatological events in the midst of which it lived, above all of the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ. In and through this proclamation of the inward significance of Jesus by the primitive Church, God addresses men of all ages in an eternal message. This divine message summons me in the *hic et nunc* to respond with the existential decision in which, according to Bultmann, faith consists. It is in the new testament, 'the prayer-book of the primitive Church', that the *kerygma* is contained. But in order that the divine message which it enshrines may be made available to me, it must be 'demythologized'. It must be freed, that is to say, from the 'mythological' forms of thought and expression in which the Jewish and Hellenistic communities first proclaimed it. In the new testament the message of God is cast in the form of stories about Jesus. 'Demythologizing' makes the story form 'transparent', so that the message shines through and penetrates to me as God's existential summons. What is real in this message is Jesus on his cross. All else is a proclamation of the inward significance this event bears for me.

Such, in very brief outline, is the 'demythologizing' theory which this book in part presupposes and in part restates. But Dr Robinson notes (and he is certainly not alone in this) a significant modification in the position of Bultmann's younger disciples, a modification which seems to some extent to have influenced Bultmann's own more recent expositions. Originally what was important was not what Jesus was in himself so much as what the primitive Church was inspired to make of

1 *Kerygma* means the primitive proclamation of the gospel which forms the basis of the new testament.

him. That was the *kerygma*, and, as Bultmann said, 'one may not go back behind the *kerygma*, using it as a "source" in order to reconstruct a "historical Jesus" with his "messianic consciousness", his "inwardness" or his "heroism"'. But now, while these 'positivist' approaches still remain illegitimate and ultimately futile, it is possible and necessary to get back through the *kerygma* not merely to Jesus on the cross, but to Jesus in the total span of his public life, that is, to 'the historical Jesus' considered precisely in his existential significance. The starting-point of the *kerygma* has been pushed back from the end of Christ's public life, the cross, to the beginning of it, his baptism. What he said and did in himself has become part of the *kerygma*, and John the Baptist is now 'the sentinel at the frontier between the aeons' (p. 17).

The second way back to 'the historical Jesus' is via the non-kerygmatic material in the gospels. The 'kerygmaticizing' process of the primitive Church 'would leave unaltered precisely those sayings and scenes in which Jesus made his intention and understanding of existence most apparent . . .' (p. 69). Thus independently of the primitive Church's kerygmatic presentation of Jesus, 'the material whose historicity has been established is sufficient to make a historical encounter with Jesus possible. His action, the intention latent in it, the understanding of existence it implies, and thus his selfhood, can be encountered historically. And this in turn can be compared with the *kerygma*, once the meaning the *kerygma* conveys to us has begun to shine through the kerygmatic language in which it is communicated' (p. 105). So Dr Robinson formulates the working hypothesis of the new quest: 'If an encounter with the *kerygma* is an encounter with the meaning of Jesus, then an encounter with Jesus should be an encounter with the meaning of the *kerygma*'. In the final chapter he attempts to show by a number of important examples that this hypothesis is in fact verified, that the historical Jesus whom we encounter through the non-kerygmatic material is in fact the same in his existential significance as the Jesus who stands behind the *kerygma*.

As coming from a whole-hearted disciple of Bultmann, much of what Dr Robinson says, and still more of what he presupposes, must inevitably be unacceptable to any Catholic. Yet it contains elements of great value for the qualified and discriminating new testament scholar. It is surprising in a work which is otherwise notably well documented, that Bultmann's *History and Eschatology* should not have been used. In so many ways it seems supremely *ad rem*, and judicious quotations from it might have helped Dr Robinson to explain more clearly what he means by 'modern historiography'. One could wish that less space had been used in arguing with adherents of other schools such as Dodd and Stauffer, and in restating the basic positions of

Bultmann. The author's own argument, though somewhat diffuse and repetitious in presentation, is intensely interesting, and one would like to see him develop it at greater length.

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By G. A. F. Knight. (S.C.M. Press; 30s.)

This book is an attempt to recreate, by careful examination of the sacred text, the living experience of the nation of Israel in its relations with God progressively revealing himself; and to present Israel's own divinely inspired interpretation of that experience. The author considers this the only way to do justice to the theology of the old testament, for 'the moment we seek to tabulate and systematize that living experience . . . its reality will grow cold and dead to our touch' (p. 19). The author is not a Catholic and he does not seem to be familiar with Catholic works on the subject; he is no doubt here revealing his own reactions to the 'scientific' treatment of the inspired books by 'scholars who may not necessarily be committed to a Christian obedience' (p. 7). He insists that the old testament is the word of God to the Church, and that St Augustine's principle '*credo ut intelligam*' must be followed by all who hope to understand it.

The author also seeks to discover what the old testament has to say to the twentieth century in the light of the Christian revelation as a whole. He does not view the old testament as merely preparing for the new; he sees them rather as parallel, though successive, events in the working out of the divine plan of redemption. In both testaments God reveals to us his redemptive activity in and through the Son. In the old testament this 'son' is the nation of Israel (Exodus iv, 22, etc.). God dealt with Israel in the same way, and to the same purpose, as he dealt with his divine Son. "In Israel" God did not succeed in redeeming the world. It remained for him to act "in Christ" in order finally to draw all men to himself' (p. 8). And we may expect these dealings to be paralleled again in his relations with the Christian Church, body of the divine Son, and with the individual Christian. 'The story of Israel is the story of "me" writ large' (p. 215).

It is perhaps a consequence of the author's 'experiential' method that the reasoning employed is often intuitional rather than logical; one is often left wondering whether a particular conclusion really follows from the premisses given. That is not to say that it is necessarily false. Presumably we must have had the same 'experience' before we can be in a position to judge; we cannot but gain in biblical understanding if we make the effort to acquire this. If we find even then that we cannot agree with an interpretation, it will not be a bad thing to have been