

Biblical Deeps and Shallows

ST GREGORY THE GREAT once said that the word of God, by which he meant Scripture, is like a river that is both shallow and deep, where a lamb can find a foothold and an elephant can float at large. Of the following recent books on Scriptures some likewise are for the non-specialist, some for the specialist. *La Parole de Dieu*¹ is an excellent introduction for the intelligent layman; it is in fact more than that, it is an initiation, the author taking pains to start by setting the Bible in its proper relation to faith and to the Church, with a sensible chapter on how to go about reading it, introducing the reader to Hebrew words, ways of thinking and literary procedure, outlining the way in which revelation was given in history, in a history, and giving a long chapter to the history of the Bible itself and its exegesis. Two further books deal with Hebrew mentality. M. Tresmontant,² in an essay first published in the 'Lectio Divina' series, educes the metaphysics implied in the language and concepts of the Bible; his method is to contrast the Hebrew categories with those European ones stemming from the Greek, in particular from Plotinus and the Platonist tradition, but it may be doubted in the end whether the attempt to express the Hebrew mind in Western abstractions, even if only to contrast them, does not defeat its own purpose. Professor Childs³ studies the question of myth as it enters into, conflicts with, and is adapted by, the Hebrew mind under the influence of revelation: this is perhaps a book for the specialist, but it is a sane and valuable contribution to one aspect of Old Testament study, his analysis of the texts he has chosen as illustrations is lucid and convincing, and his broader examination of what he calls the 'Old Testament's categories of reality' of time and space is important for the fulfilment in Christology and liturgy.

A new introduction to the New Testament by two American scholars⁴ is concerned less with the mind of the people through whom revelation was given, though due importance is given to the role of the community in the creation of the New Testament writings, than with the world in which those writings appeared: it is illustrated with a number of photographs and maps which are helpful, but the attitude of the writers to such problems as the common source of Matthew and Luke and the historical tradition in the Fourth Gospel, leaves an impression of coming from certain strata of the higher criticism that are now crumbling. With the latest book of Professor Cullman to be translated⁵ we are back on the level of the most recent scholarship, none the less interesting for being handled with a certain

¹ *La Parole de Dieu*. By Georges Auzou. (Editions de l'Orante, 14 F.)

² *A Study of Hebrew Thought*. By Claude Tresmontant, translated by M. F. Gibson. (Desclée, 150 FB.)

³ *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*. By Brevard S. Childs. (S.C.M., 9s. 6d.)

⁴ *The Living World of the New Testament*. By Howard Clark Kee and Franklin W. Young. (Darton, Longman and Todd, 25s.)

⁵ *The Christology of the New Testament*. By Oscar Cullmann. Translated by Shirley G. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall. (S.C.M., 42s.)

flexibility of imagination. Professor Cullman adopts the same basis for his examination of New Testament Christology as Dr Vincent Taylor did, that is, the titles given to Jesus by the earliest Christians, though he restricts the number used by Dr Taylor, confining himself to those most frequently used. To these he applies roughly the same method each time, elucidating first the connotations of the title for contemporary Judaism (and where necessary Hellenism), the use of or reaction to it by our Lord, and the Christological sense of it in the minds of the first Christians; in the course of this, as one might expect, he provides much illuminating and stimulating exegesis of the texts, and his chapter on 'The Son of Man' is a very important contribution to the study of this most ambiguous title. A final chapter relates the conclusions of the separate enquiries to one another and brings out the central unity of the Christology of the New Testament.

Two shorter works are also concerned with this aspect of New Testament Studies. Professor Schweizer^a takes as his starting point the concept of discipleship as it appears in the vocation stories in the gospels; this was profoundly upset by the Crucifixion and remodelled after the Resurrection, leading to the first and most ancient Christology of the Just One, vindicated and exalted by God. *Son and Saviour*⁷ is composed of articles by five Catholic scholars which appeared originally in *Lumière et Vie*; they come under the category of initiation, the modulation of scholarship for the intelligent reader who wishes not only to know but to live by what he knows of the Saviour. The translation is perhaps at times over-literal; did M. Gelin really mean that the gospel ideas 'persecuted' (p. 37) the Judaeo-Christian mentality?

Finally St Paul. Professor Munck's study of St Paul⁸ is certainly deep enough for an elephant to float in; to any but a specialist in Pauline studies it is likely to seem a dust-bath. But his aim is of great importance: it is to remove the lingering influence of the Tübingen school with its dogmatic dichotomy of Paul and Jerusalem. He insists that the text of St Paul must be studied long and deeply before ever the data of Acts are brought into relationship with it, the preference then being given always to Paul. This indeed leaves another problem, the relation of Acts to the Epistles, in even more acute relief. Professor Munck's arguments are long and intricate but his conclusions carry considerable weight. *The Powers that Be*⁹ is a study of the enigmatic passage in Romans xiii, 1-7; the exegesis is prepared by very careful examination of Jewish and Graeco-Roman concepts of the spirit-world and the state, and the book is concerned with the modern Protestant discussion of the New Testament attitude to the latter.

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^a *Lordship and Discipleship*. By Eduard Schweizer. (S.C.M., 10s. 6d.)

⁷ *Son and Saviour: A Symposium*. By A. Gelin *et al.* Translated by Anthony Wheaton. (Geoffrey Chapman, 12s. 6d.)

⁸ *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. By Johannes Munck. Translated by Frank Clarke. (S.C.M., 42s.)

⁹ *The Powers that Be*. By Clinton D. Morrison. (S.C.M., 9s. 6d.)