

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS. By William Manson, D.D. (Hodder and Stoughton; 10s. 6d.)

In our modern Bibles *Hebrews* occupies a place between *Philemon* and *James*, that is, between the thirteenth epistle of St Paul's and the first Catholic epistle. It seems thus to be separated from the collection of St Paul's writings, and this suspicion practically every non-Catholic writer today seeks to confirm. But the position of the epistle in the Bible has not always been the same. In the oldest uncial MSS. it followed the second epistle to the Thessalonians and preceded the Pastoral epistles, while in the Chester-Beatty papyrus Codex of the third century it comes immediately after the *Romans*.

Besides disassociating St Paul with the epistle to the Hebrews, non-Catholic writers in this country over the last half-century have for the most part crossed out the title of the epistle, though it figures in all the codices of the fourth century and in the early third-century papyrus of the Chester-Beatty collection. Professor James Moffatt in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* ('the most valuable critical study of the book', writes Professor Manson, 'which the modern age has received') maintained that the epistle was an anonymous writing to some people who were not Hebrews at all; that it was an appeal to Christians of Gentile extraction against their drifting to irreligion or paganism.

The Professor of Biblical Criticism in the University of Edinburgh has incorporated in this volume a series of lectures delivered in Edinburgh at the invitation of the Baird Lectureship Trustees. His purpose is not to give a commentary on the whole epistle, but rather by internal evidence to show that it is not a development of esoteric ideas on the part of an individual theologian, but that it is grounded essentially on truths that were a part of the common Christian confession. He is not satisfied with the modern suggestions that the epistle was addressed to Gentile converts, and he returns to the traditional view which regarded the recipients as a group of Jewish converts who were being tempted for various reasons to relapse into Judaism.

The new modification which Professor Manson suggests is to emphasise the connection of the epistle's ideas with the sermon of St Stephen (*Acts* ch. 7). He considers the root-principles of St Stephen's teaching to be 'his vision of the supra-historical, eschatological nature of the Christian calling, and his opposition of the gospel to the cultus and Law of Judaism as things which Christ had superseded' (p. 42). *Hebrews*, in other words, develops the idea of the world-mission Christians and is directed to the community of Jewish converts living in Rome whose minds are still in the past. Professor Manson sets the date of the epistle at about A.D. 60 (pp. 56, 167).

The volume marks a return to the traditional idea that the recipients of the epistle were Jews. But on the question of authorship Professor Manson shares the view of nearly all non-Catholic writers that St Paul must be excluded. He suggests in his place an Alexandrian Jew (pp. 39, 168) conversant with the teaching and language of Philo; and with the epistles of St Paul and *Hebrews* we can obtain 'a stereoscopic view of the theology of the World Church in the apostolic age' (p. 7). In this section the author is influenced by the work of Professor Moffatt. The alleged debt to Philo is not new. The Reverend Dr W. Leonard, Professor of Holy Scripture at St Patrick's Seminary, Sydney, analysed this question with great care and arrived at the opposite conclusion: 'The writer [of *Hebrews*] is under no debt to Philo for his ideas, and, as far as lexical contacts are concerned, some of the Epistles of St Paul, notably those to the Corinthians, seem to present nearly as many' (*Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Vatican Polyglot Press, 1939, p. 215). Catholic writers connect the authorship of the epistle with St Paul in one or the other of two ways.

The argument in the book is generally clearly presented. Occasionally unusual words halt the exposition, e.g. 'givenness' (p. 7), 'exacter' (p. 9), 'resiling' (p. 73), 'persuadedness' (p. 76), 'divisive' (p. 42), 'pled' (p. 197).

D. J. LEAHY

INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT 1900-1950. By A. M. Hunter. (S.C.M. Press; 10s. 6d.)

The idea of this book is completely splendid, and the carrying out of the idea, as far as it goes, is most satisfactory and delightful. The only trouble is that it does not go nearly far enough to fulfil adequately the idea. But the author, a professor at Aberdeen University, so sweetly disarms the critic at the outset: 'the book makes no claim to completeness. It is a survey, but a far from exhaustive one. It aims at providing a readable conspectus, not at chronicling everything that has been happening in New Testament studies in the last half-century. Moreover, it has been written in the north-east corner of Great Britain. . . . For all sins of omission, all sins of insularity, and all sins of ignorance, he begs forgiveness.' Before such humility it would be churlish to find fault beyond supposing that the author's geographical position cut him off from contact with the big trends of biblical thought, especially among Catholic scholars on the continent, as sketched (for instance) in the article adapted from Dom Charlier printed in the last issue.

Let us therefore confine ourselves to a valuation of the very useful piece of work that has been done. Once again, the conception is superb. There are ten chapters, corresponding to ten 'areas' of N.T. studies, and in each 'area' the general trends (within the author's