

philosophy itself and in the Jewish variation of it Dr Dodd finds a genuine mysticism, to which the gospel writer was able to appeal, being familiar with both its ideas and its language. For himself, however, these ideas and words had taken a deeper meaning from his Christian faith. While still remaining intelligible to the non-Christian reader, they were now used as vehicles of Christian truth, and to a believer would convey the full Christian sense. For instance, in the discourse on the Bread of Life (ch. v) a Christian would not see *that*, but would eventually be brought so far as to see that some form of union between the disciple and Christ was meant, without understanding the mode of establishing it (pp. 233-4). In short the author is applying, in one particular way, St Paul's principle of making himself all things to all men. The gospel approaches much nearer than the Synoptic Gospels do to the standpoint of the apologetic writings of the next century and especially of the Alexandrian ones. Indeed the term 'Alexandrian gospel' suggests itself naturally to the mind as one reads Dr Dodd's book.

Some writers on the Fourth Gospel have no doubt over-stressed its Jewish character, and have practically refused to admit any literary influences except purely Palestinian ones. Is not Dr Dodd going too far in the other direction, and exaggerating the Hellenistic influences? There certainly seem to be passages (especially the prologue) where the author approaches the language and ideas of Philo, but does not the book remain much more Jewish than Hellenistic? The prologue is followed by some sixty verses of narrative where we are very definitely in the atmosphere of Palestinian villages and towns. The book includes several most interesting studies of spiritual documents of the time, especially the Hermetic writings and Philo, and some very valuable chapters on the history and use of a dozen vital terms ('truth', 'spirit', 'Messiah', etc.) where Dr Dodd's scrupulous fairness and candour are as conspicuous as his learning. In conclusion I can by no means agree that our final judgment on the spiritual value of a gospel can be independent of the question of authorship. The writer claims to be an Apostle, relating historical facts. If he was no Apostle and invented many of his stories, the only name for him is impostor, and it is idle to talk about his spiritual greatness. A mystic who tells lies is a failure as mystic.

W. REES

#### OBEDIENCE. (Blackfriars Publications; 16s. 6d.)

The problems arising in connection with religious obedience are not too difficult to state, but much more difficult to resolve. This work is the third volume in the series '*Religious Life*' translated from the French and the result of conferences convened for the assistance of religious. One would be prepared to say that they are as authoritative as the people who

delivered them, and no more. As is usual in such conferences the findings are reflective and inconclusive. They are therefore a stimulus for further consideration for those who are professionally interested in the subject, or for those who by reason of their office are responsible for the moulding of religious life in the contemporary world. It would not appear to be useful to plunge novices and junior religious into this cauldron of discussion about matters which are at the very basis of their formation. It should be unequivocally stated that obedience is an obligation in religious life even when the vow is not directly engaged. If, as asserted by Father Bergh, S.J., obedience to the constitutions and the rule does not as such fall under the exercise of *dominative power*, what is the meaning of obedience *secundum regulam*? There is need of emphasis on obedience to a person, within the margin of a rule, though not to a book of rules as such. Also it is hard to see how it is possible to have a voluntary transgression without specific motive, and why such a transgression is a *positive imperfection*. The fact is that an act of this kind is either meritorious or a sin.

The account given of the attitude to penalties in the Dominican Order is inadequate.

Perhaps it is unavoidable that the psychology of women should be in the forefront. The psychology of nuns is another matter. The contribution by A. M. Henry, O.P., on 'The Obedience of Women', is enlightened and may be read with great profit by subjects and superiors.

Genuine obedience does not exclude the possibility of frank discussion. And P. François de Sainte-Marie, O.C.D., considers this a desirable practice, and a way to abolish 'that currying of approval by which many religious succeed in getting their own way . . . under the impression all the time that they are enjoying the blessings of obedience'.

It is to be devoutly hoped that this book will shed light where it is needed most. But we feel that in many cases no improvement can be achieved on the lines suggested except by strong measures from those who have the duty to command and therefore the right to be obeyed.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

THE SIGN OF JONAS. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 18s.)

Words and deeds, the thought and the act, make an odd counterpoint, and one can never tell which line will carry the melody. All that any life worth the name, lived honestly under God, will always show, is an endless capacity for change and development. The themes that seemed most significant fall out, and others whose presence was almost unsuspected come to the fore. Meanwhile, as the Abbé de Tourville used to say, a good state of soul can go hand in hand with a feeling of deep inward disharmony.

E