

REVIEWS

JESUS ON TRIAL by A. E. Harvey *SPCK* 1976 pp. 140 £2.95.

It was Clement of Alexandria who in the second century first recorded the opinion that the Fourth Gospel was a 'spiritual' gospel—an interpretation which persists to the present day (John's gospel is so described by Geza Vermes in his book *Jesus the Jew*). I assume that the term 'spiritual' is applied to John's work because it is thought that this gospel is considerably less subject to historical control than are the Synoptic gospels and that it is mainly concerned with Jesus' inner experience of his relationship to the Father, to the Spirit and, through the Spirit, to his disciples.

Mr Harvey's book (subtitled 'A Study in the Fourth Gospel') convincingly shows that the gospel of St John is not simply concerned with the mystical life of Jesus but is firmly located in the Jewish legal traditions and practices which are thought to have been in force in the first century AD.

Harvey maintains that St John wrote the gospel to explain how a man who had been legally found guilty of blasphemy according to the Law of God and executed as a royal pretender by the Romans could possibly be the Messiah and Son of God that the Christians claimed him to be.

Legal terminology occurs frequently in the Fourth Gospel and it is Harvey's hypothesis that John faced the difficulty of preaching the crucified Jesus as Messiah by using as a literary device the form of the lawsuit. It is argued that John invites the reader of the gospel to pass the verdict that Jesus' judges did not take sufficient

evidence into account in their judicial deliberations, nor did they accept as valid the witnesses to his Messiahship.

Basic to all four gospels is the question as to the nature of Jesus' authority and power—is he from God or from the devil? Harvey shows how by the use of Jewish legal procedures John explores the judicial implications of Jesus' claims and of the conflicts with his opponents as to the nature of his authority.

Whereas the Synoptic tradition knows of one 'trial' of Jesus (beginning with Caiaphas and ending when he is brought to Pilate) this book presents Jesus on trial throughout his public life in his clashes with his co-religionists and, after his death, on trial still in the reaction provoked by his followers' witness to him as Son of God.

The points of difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels are carefully noted, but in a stimulating and perceptive use of scholarship Mr Harvey shows how John brings into sharp and developed emphasis the element of legal threat which remains unstressed in the first three gospels.

Much scholarly work has gone into this book but you are not beaten about the head by it; the learned footnotes are there for further reference but the burden of the book does not depend on reference to them. In presenting *Jesus on Trial* Mr Harvey writes as compellingly as any thriller writer.

ROGER CLARKE O.P.

ESSAYS ON FREEDOM OF ACTION, edited by Ted Honderich. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, London, 1978. pp. viii + 215. £2.50.

This book, a collection of articles on freedom and determinism, is a paper-back reprint (with minor modifications) of a hard-back published in 1973. It includes essays by Mary Warnock, John Watling, David Wiggins, Harry Frankfurt, Anthony Kenny, David Pears, Donald Davidson,

D. C. Derrett and Ted Honderich.

Insofar as it is possible to make general comment on a diverse and professional collection of closely argued philosophical essays, three points can be offered with regard to the present one. First, some of the essays (notably that of Watling) are de-