

**THE NEW TESTAMENT, ITS BACKGROUND, GROWTH AND CONTENT**, by Bruce M. Metzger. Lutterworth Press, London, 1969. 288 pp. 30s. £1.50p.

There is often a formal dullness about introductions to the New Testament, so it is with happy relief that we turn to this work of Professor Bruce Metzger whose writing is very different. He sets out the basic information needed for an intelligent reading and understanding of the New Testament. The book is dedicated to the Professor's two sons, and the sights are set for schools and colleges. Yet most people who have left college can still profit by this comprehensive yet concise and balanced survey of and use of present-day scholarship. Only one who is completely master of the subject could succeed in presenting the many facets of modern findings without distortion and in relatively simple language which reads well; and this is what the author has done. His standpoint is in part illustrated in the pages on Miracles in the Gospel (pp. 132-135). He shows how the 37 recorded miracles of our Lord are not described simply for the sake of the miraculous. Yet miracles they were, and he sees them both critically and with robust faith which never thinks of whittling all away—as some would.

The general plan of the work comprises introductory articles on the political and

social backgrounds. Next come the sources for our knowledge of the life and teaching of Christ, a summary of the life of Christ and aspects of the teaching of Christ. The Apostolic Age is considered to stretch from A.D. 30-100. The Acts, and the expansion of Christianity through the Epistles, and Gospels, and finally the Apocalypse, come in for consideration, and each book is also summarized. Much summarizing would seem to be a good way of teaching and learning; even Philemon, 2 and 3 John, and the Apocalypse have a summary. A last chapter, called Appendix, is on the formation of the canon of the New Testament. Professor Metzger's conclusion on the difficult subject is presumably that of a number of our Christian brethren. Thus he talks about 'the self-authenticating quality of these writings which imposed themselves as canonical upon the Church' (p. 276).

The work ends with an annotated bibliography and an index of principal New Testament references. It is perhaps ungracious to suggest that a chapter is missing: on the geographical background of the Holy Land, and of the world of St Paul. The two maps provided are not sufficient. ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

**BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**, by James D. G. Dunn. S.C.M., 1970. 248 pp. 50s.

This book is a revised doctoral thesis by a young Presbyterian theologian, and offers detailed discussion of New Testament texts, with a view to refuting both sacramentalists and Pentecostals. The author (hereafter JD) contends that, for the New Testament, baptism in the Spirit is what makes one 'a Christian'; so the sacramentalist is wrong to claim this for baptism, and the Pentecostal is wrong to regard it as a *second* blessing. Unfortunately, the needs of this twofold polemic often lead to questionable exegesis, aided by a highly-loaded but quite unjustifiable use of the phrase 'Christian in the New Testament sense of the word' (let me refer JD to a New Testament concordance!).

JD's purpose is to provoke discussion, and this is welcome—on all sides we need to broaden the basis of our thought on the Spirit, and recapture the diversity, not to say confusion, in New Testament and early Patristic sources.

Rather than take up particular points in the book, let me raise a couple of basic methodological questions which, I think, JD has failed to cope with.

First, there is a very complicated interplay between exegesis and experience. JD is right to say that for the New Testament 'possession of the Spirit was a fact of *immediate* perception', not an inference from ritual or ethical correctness. He is probably also right to claim that Christian initiation is a work of the Spirit, and that, for the New Testament, this was a matter of experience. But we cannot infer that it is the *experience* of the Spirit which is, strictly, constitutive of Christian initiation. And if we do, as JD seems to, then we have unchurched most of our fellow Christians. The Pentecostal doctrine of the *second* blessing is one way of not doing this; whatever we think of their exegesis and terminology, their problem is real: there are Christians who *have* had the sort of