

**CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY: EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN ITS JEWISH SETTING** by Morna D. Hooker. *Epworth Press*. 1986. pp. iv + 76. £3.95.

In her Preface Professor Hooker presents these four Sanderson Lectures as they were delivered at the Theological Hall of the Uniting Church in Ormond College, Melbourne, 'as a foretaste of the book' she hopes 'eventually to write.' She must keep that promise, but in the meantime these fresh and provocative lectures could be invaluable for introducing new theological students to study of the New Testament.

Professor Hooker is less than happy with the present willingness of some to explore the biblical evidence 'without asking questions about the original author's intentions or situation'. For 'if we wish to discover what our biblical writers meant ... and what those for whom they wrote understood by them, then we must do our best to comprehend their world...' Although 'it is probably a mistake to play off "Greek" against "Hebrew"' the intention is to explore the formative influence played on the gospel by its Jewish context, '... and 'to examine the tensions between the old and new faiths...'

It is certainly clear that the earliest Christians included those faithful not only to synagogue but also to Temple. If with more real honesty than we can usually summon we put ourselves in their place, we may begin to see such strange truths as that the notion of Christ as the replacement of Jewish sacrifices was 'the result of being cut off from those sacrifices, rather than vice versa.' But of course the figure of Jesus was a new factor which, demanding explanation, raised the whole issue of continuity—discontinuity. In this connection, the evangelists' use of the 'new wine, old or new wineskins' complex of sayings is shown to be far from clear, reflecting different applications at different stages, at some claiming continuity, at others accepting or asserting discontinuity. What Jesus himself said is hard to discover. The 'criterion of dissimilarity' will not do; the situation is too complicated for that. (In any case it removes much that Judaism, Jesus himself, and the early church taught in common.)

Indeed, the discovery that we may rejoice to have much in common is gathering momentum. Well made here is the point that Stephen's speech should be understood less as an attack on the Law and the Temple than as part of 'an ongoing debate between Jews and Christians as to which of them are truly faithful to God...'. This surely is the main burden of Paul's speeches in Acts, but it is in the sphere of Paul's own letters that Hooker shows how easily we forget that 'we' is often 'we Jews'. When New Testament authors traced continuity with the past, however, paramount for them was the way they began by looking back from the glorious fact of the risen Jesus to find Old Testament passages which would fit the splendid reality.

The last lecture looks at the relation of the Law to Christ. It is insufficient to say, the Law witnesses to him, he replaces it. The Law is perfect, therefore something more than an equal perfection must account for Christ's superiority. The answer lies in the realm of understanding how the Law is embodied in Jesus so that he is the way, truth and life; and how as the perfect sacrifice he paradoxically becomes at once its fulfilment and release from its bondage.

A valuable and stimulating book.

A.R.C. LEANEY

**EVELYN WAUGH: THE EARLY YEARS 1903 — 39** by Martin Stannard. *Dent*, 1986. Pp xiv + 537. £14.95.

This is a lucid, thorough and compassionate biography that traces Waugh's life from the seclusion of early childhood through the tangle of his university years, the frantic rounds and travels from which the early novels and articles emerged, to reveal Waugh's own search for order and sense. Stannard draws with acumen on letters, diaries and interviews to build up a portrait which should finally dismiss superficial but lasting labels of Waugh as a 'fascist' or as a writer with no serious artistic intent. At Lancing in 1920 he was advising Dudley Carew to 'avoid any conversations on general subjects' in novels: 'Don't put down thoughts at such length. Directly suggest—be subtle, leave something to us readers' (p. 61). Stannard makes

no secret of how much Waugh's journalism was pumped out to finance an image of success and good taste, but at the same time makes clear the way in which Waugh could see through the assumptions held by many of his contemporaries and the political stances which they adopted. His ear picked up the clichés: 'That is the danger which faces so many people today', he wrote in 1932, 'to have no considered opinions on any subject, to put up with what is wasteful and harmful with the excuse that there is "good in everything" — which in most cases means inability to distinguish between good and bad' (p. 297). In stark contrast with the prevalent politics of idealism Waugh knew the limitations and flawed nature of the political animal: 'given propitious circumstances, men and women who seem quite orderly, will commit any conceivable atrocity' (p. 483). The only realistic means to salvation was through the Church and in Christ.

This is a biography valuable not only for what it tells us of Waugh, but also for the picture of the age it presents.

RICHARD FINN OP

**JOHN CASSIAN, *Conferences*, trans. Colm Luibheid. Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press. 1985. pp. xvi + 208. \$9.95.**

**JOHN RUUSBROEC, *The Spiritual Espousals and other works*, trans. James A. Wiseman. Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press. 1985. pp. xviii + 286. \$9.95.**

**JOHANNES TAULER, *Sermons*, trans. Maria Shradly. Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press. 1985. pp. xvi + 183. \$9.95**

Of these three new volumes in the Classics of Western Spirituality unfortunately only one can really be commended. Cassian has been badly treated; the introduction by Owen Chadwick is disappointing and the selection of *Conferences* is badly translated. The introduction to Tauler contains some valuable comments, especially on Tauler's doctrine of faith as non-experience, but these comments are (as Emily Dickinson said) like 'beads among the bog'; to find them, the reader has to wade through a morass of vague and garbled historical assertions and a daunting array of jargonistic flora. The translation is imprecise, inaccurate and sometimes incomplete (and only a selection of sermons is included).

Ruusbroec, by contrast, is interestingly presented and well translated. The introduction situates him usefully and clearly in his historical context and suggests cogent reasons why Ruusbroec should be taken as a writer of considerable importance in the history of Christian piety. His major writings are well represented in this selection. There is a good bibliography (neither of the other two volumes has any bibliography at all).

SIMON TUGWELL OP

**MARCUS GEWELD EN GENADE. DE ACTUALITEIT VAN HET MARCUSE-VANGELIE by Benoît Standaert. *Lanoo, Taitt (Belgium), 1985. pp. 215.***

Few readers of *New Blackfriars* will be able to read this book written in Flemish. This review thus has been seen as an invitation to get the book translated. It offers a new and well-founded view on the structure of St. Mark's gospel. According to the author it was written to be read to candidates for baptism in the Easter night. Its composition follows the structure of the classic discourse: prologue, narrative, argumentation, dénouement and an epilogue, complete with a 'deus ex machina' as in many dramas of that time. This analysis offers numerous new insights into the contents of the gospel and new confirmation of old insights. One example: the young man who flees away naked in 14:51–52 refers to the candidates for baptism who will enter the water naked; the young man is back again in the epilogue, the resurrection story, as a person who died with Christ and is risen with him. Brief colloraries on 'women' and 'violence' in St. Mark's gospel enrich the book.

A.F. LASCARIS OP