

sidered why the community adopted certain titles, and what their significance to them was. Part three, on the theology of Paul, is disappointing for other reasons; it is impoverished by the decision to consider only those letters which are 'undisputedly authentic'; and thus not only Pastorals and Ephesians, but also Colossians and II Thessalonians are excluded. There are again traces of the same cavalier dogmatism: 'The threefold report of the conversion (of Paul) in the Acts is no use as a source, as it is legendary' (p. 163). There is a *granum veritatis* here, but it is allowed to grow into a great tree. The treatment of Paul's theology itself is so fragmentary as to be almost useless: ten pages are given to anthropological

concepts, eight to hope, six to man in the world and thirteen to God's saving action in Christ. Part four deals with the development after Paul and part five with John (two paragraphs on the Logos, two pages on the passion).

This is a disappointing book. The problems are posed from a Bultmannian standpoint which will be unfamiliar to many English readers. In consequence a vast number of important questions are left untouched (e.g. the growth of the New Testament from the Old; there are only thirty references to the Old Testament in the whole book). But the most unpleasing element in the book is its peremptory and dictatorial tone.

HENRY WANSBROUGH, O.S.B.

THE TENDENCIES OF THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION, by E. P. Sanders. *C.U.P.*, Cambridge, 1969. 382 pp. 90s. (£4.50).

This ninth monograph of a series under the imprint of the Society for New Testament Studies marks a breakthrough in synoptic studies. Let no one say this is only a monograph: it is an important work, and by its structure and content also an *instrument de travail*. A complete reassessment of the synoptic question was needed; and now it has been made, at least in part. The author speaks of his achievement modestly, calling his work 'an individual study of a particular aspect of the early Christian tradition', and in fact 'a contribution to a total view' (p. 27).

The author's starting point is the form-criticism of Bultmann and Dibelius. He then goes on to show how his own approach can be defined over against Gerhardsson, whose method leads to a stressing of the rigidity or unchanging character of tradition, whereas his own is almost wholly concerned with the changing character of tradition.

The major part of the work is then a detailed, meticulous and scholarly attempt to trace the fluctuations of that tradition, as it can be discerned subsequently to the Synoptic Gospels, in the text of the New Testament, in synoptic material and the early Fathers, and in apocryphal literature. These form the principal groups of material which the author undertakes to examine and discuss one by one. Surprisingly enough a group of material not handled at all is that of the joannine writings as representative of a later stage in the tradition of the New Testament. No synoptic study can afford to by-pass the joannine writings. Kurt Aland's Synopsis is significant of a new attitude. Certainly the 'total view' which Dr

Sanders advocates would examine with equal diligence the generality of the New Testament tradition and so the joannine writings.

Each group of material is examined in terms of categories, the principal of which are length, detail, and Semitism. All through the same question recurs: was the tendency of the tradition toward greater length or abbreviation, toward detail or simplicity, toward Semitism or better Greek? Thus, for example, 'we shall see in how many instances the manuscript tradition, the Fathers, and the Apocryphal tradition change a good Greek reading to a more Semitic reading, how many times they change a Semitic reading to a better Greek reading, and finally, how many times Matthew has a Semitic reading not in Mark, Mark one not in Matthew, and so forth' . . . (p. 45). The usual contrast of Semitic and Greek appears all through. Some day we hope to hear more about the Semite who spoke perfect Greek or the Greek who spoke Semitic; I mean bilingualism as it affects the tradition of the Gospel, and the writing of the New Testament generally.

Anyway, the results of the detailed investigation are all carefully tabulated and form the greater part of this monograph. Summaries are given of the Gospel comparisons, and the results provoke thought, e.g. under the heading 'Actions in one Gospel and not in another', it is found that Matthew is longer than Mark nine times; Mark is longer than Matthew 19 times . . . Luke is longer than Mark 11 times, Mark is longer than Luke 22 times . . . etc. (p. 82). Significantly the author goes on to say that 'whatever evidence there is in the category

of length for the solution of the synoptic problem weighs against the two-document hypothesis and especially against Mark's priority, unless it can be offset by the *redaktions-geschichtlich* consideration that Matthew and Luke were abbreviators' (p. 87).

Thus carefully, by an accumulation of detail, it is possible to have some notion of the tendencies of the Gospel traditions. Internal criteria have long been used to determine problems of relative antiquity and authenticity in the synoptic material: yet, a real test, along the lines suggested by the author, has never before been forthcoming. In this respect new ground has been broken, and the outcome of

it all, though stated somewhat negatively, is nevertheless revolutionary in respect of the usual line taken in New Testament studies. From the concluding sections let us note: first, a very general and all-embracing remark, 'dogmatic statements that a certain characteristic proves a certain passage to be earlier than another are never justified' (p. 272). Finally we are, and very rightly, exhorted to take seriously 'the ambiguity of our results and regard the synoptic problem with some uncertainty. *The evidence does not seem to warrant the degree of certainty with which many scholars hold the two-document hypothesis*', and the italics are the author's (p. 278). ROLAND POTTER, O.P

CHRIST IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by Norman Hook. *Lutterworth*, London, 1968. 121 pp. 21s.

SECULAR CHRIST, by John Vincent. *Lutterworth*, London, 1968. 232 pp. 18s.

Norman Hook's short and very readable book is an exercise in 'beginning at the other end' applied to the central doctrine of the person of Christ. The author distinguishes between a Logos Christology which sees Jesus, as John and Paul did, as the pre-existent Son of God made flesh and born of a woman, and a Spirit Christology (that of the Synoptics) in which Jesus is the Spirit-filled man who was raised by God to the dignity of Son. Hook rejects the former view as being unhelpful to modern man and prefers the picture of Jesus given in the first three gospels because it is able to explain more satisfactorily the genuine humanity and manifest human development of Jesus. He is aware of the danger of Adoptionism but prefers to take this risk rather than fall into what he considers the almost inevitable Docetism of the Logos Christology. (He is also suspicious of the Greek background of the latter.) The slightness of the book is at once its strength and its weakness: its strength because it will reach a public which deserves to have theology discussed in readable terms; its weakness because nearly twenty centuries of Christological thought cannot with justice be compressed into 120 pages, and there is the inevitable danger of heresy—in the original meaning of the word as a *selection* of aspects of the Mystery instead of comprehension of all the elements. I think this is legitimate in a book of piety, and it is here that Norman Hook's book may well be most valuable. Anything that sets us thinking of Jesus as a real human being with the same humanity as ourselves is to be welcomed. But as a work of theology which rejects St John's gospel and

much of St Paul as well, the book is too short to be convincing.

John Vincent's book is on the contrary by no means slight or lightweight. It is a serious attempt to find a genuine Christological basis for thinking about Christianity from within the 'radical boat'. Hitherto radical secularist thinkers, beginning as they do 'from the other end', have based their thinking about Christianity on their thinking about the modern world, and if they had a weakness it was in their insufficient appeal to the Christ event. John Vincent remedies that omission by a book which makes the problem of Christ central and seeks to ask as the foremost question, 'What does Christ mean for you today?' The answer he gives is that Christ is the secular action in the world of the hidden God. For him 'God is dynamic; he is seen in actions, momentarily, as he wills. He has no "continuity"—or at least if he has, he does not show it to us.' And so being a disciple of Jesus means carrying on that secular activity of the hidden God in one's situation. We are here in the tradition of religionless Christianity which eschews a religious relationship of personal approach to God (for instance the traditional saving faith of the nonconformists) and aims simply at doing God's work for him in the world (Harvey Cox's I-you relationship rather than I-thou). 'The disciple's task is to live in a world over which Christ is already the only Lord and simply to bear witness to this by his deeds.' The author does not, of course, throw out faith but sees it in relation to works in terms of its being the 'inside' of secular activity and not a separate activity itself. The Christian