

prize, and for the first time discovered that the Fourth Gospel could have a coherent meaning. I went to the Hoskyns tradition not for technical learning but for method in study and for the possibility of an interpretation that was also a confession of faith.

Methods in study have greatly changed in fifty years. The *Wörterbuch* style of word study has been severely criticized, though it may still be used with discretion. The discovery that the repetition of biblical concepts does not lead to church renewal has diminished the former popularity of 'Biblical Theology'. And the aim of justifying confessional positions—in Hoskyns' case an Anglican form of liberal Catholicism—by judicious reading of scripture lacks integrity. Hence I cannot agree with Mr. Parsons that 'a patient study of Hoskyns' provides some of the clues to the unresolved questions' in theology today. I cannot now re-read the famous commentary on John with patience and profit—as I still can the commentary by R.H. Lightfoot which was published later and yet is more antique in style than Hoskyns.

And yet Mr. Parsons' well-written book, which gained him a higher degree of the University of London, is to be commended. It begins by describing the historical background of Hoskyns' work in the inter-action of Liberal Catholic, Liberal Protestant and Modernist parties in Britain and his knowledge of movements of thought among German theologians. The main part of the book examines the earlier stage of his work, the creation of *The Riddle of the New Testament*, and finally the Barthian style of the Commentary on John and its place within the modern expansion of Johannine studies. That indeed is a very competitive movement, and no doubt it is right that Hoskyns should not go unnoticed when there are six other fine commentaries all demanding attention.

K. GRAYSTON

WHY IS THERE A NEW TESTAMENT? by Joseph F. Kelly. *Geoffrey Chapman*. 1986. p/b £8.96. Pp. 200.

'This book is about how the New testament came into being in the life of the early church' (p. 15). It is aimed at the non-specialist and presents, where possible, a consensus view of history, while taking account of scholarly debate. It is a clear and sensible narrative, which concentrates on the first four centuries of the Christian era, depicting in what circumstances writings which came to form the New Testament were written, what other Christian writings existed, when, where and how selections were made and a canon gradually defined, how manuscripts were produced and what manuscript evidence survives from which a critical text may be compiled, what was translated, when and where, and finally, the influence of N.T. writings on the lives of ordinary people in the early church, seen through their spirituality and their iconography. The dialectical relationship between writing and community is always kept in view. Black and white photographs illustrate points from the text, and a bibliography leads interested readers to further studies. There is also a glossary of technical terms. While providing a reliable introduction to the subject, the book successfully engages the reader in its concerns.

MARGARET DAVIES