

## REVIEWS

A STUDY IN ST MARK. By Austin Farrer. (Dacre Press; 25s.)

'The sort of pattern which is there [in St Mark's Gospel], and which the newer type of research has unearthed, may be called theological or symbolical: that is to say, it is something like the sort of pattern which has for long been recognised as the grand principle of unity in St John's Gospel.' There can no longer be any doubt that this is true; and yet it may seem a very disturbing fact, for if St Mark is no longer to be accepted as a plain, straightforward historical record it might appear to follow that we must now 'let go the history of Christ and content ourselves with St Mark's inspired and dramatic presentation of the meaning of Christ and of his saving acts'. It is not the immediate purpose of this book to deal with this historical question; and yet it does most effectively present all the necessary principles for a satisfactory answer and offers a first sketch of the form that answer should take. One does not know where else to find so profound and convincing a treatment of this crucial problem. It is, in fact, a magnificently generous book. In the course of a few pages comparing St Mark with St John more light is thrown on the Fourth Gospel than one would expect to find in a whole book on the subject; just as the chapter dealing with the title 'Son of Man' has the substance of a theological treatise. Yet there is nothing here that is not integral to a proper understanding of St Mark—no throwing about of doctrine in the hope that some of it might stick and serve as useful cement.

The essential task of the book, however, is to display and expound the basic form or pattern of St Mark's Gospel and to enter into the process of thought and imagination that both discovered it and shaped it. The basis of this form or pattern is shown to be a series of cycles composed of certain topics representing different aspects of the comprehensive Christian mystery. Each cycle can be seen as a self-contained expression of the whole of the Gospel; but they are all seen to be linked together—these cycles—in a vital, beautifully complex relationship whether of prefiguration or amplification, as they move onwards in a spiral towards the final perfect expression of the Passion and Resurrection. Among the most important of the recurrent topics are those of exorcism and purification over against restoration (whether of vital powers or of life itself), as they are exhibited in the miracles of (individual) healing. And it is shown how the pattern of the healing themes narrows down 'from four to three, from three to two, and from two to one. The evangelist's purpose [being] to exhibit Christ's many healing works as types and anticipations of the one great healing work

performed on the cross and in the Easter sepulchre.' Or, again, such cyclic use is seen to be made likewise of the themes of calling and healing, and of healing and feeding. It is shown how these themes, embedded in the Gospel history, not only anticipate the end but also spring from the beginning, unfolding for St Mark from the initial Gospel data, variously expressing the mysteries of water: spirit; baptism: temptation (and eucharist); the Baptist: the Christ. One can follow St Mark's mind as it picks up with them. There is no question here of allegorisation; rather it is that 'Christ's action, according to our evangelist, constantly expresses the essentials of the Gospel, and the essentials of the Gospel are always the same'.

But it is impossible to give any brief impression of the immense interest and religious inspiration of this book. One or two of the critical standpoints may be out of bounds for us; and although the splendid vigorous style never fails, there is a good deal of unnecessarily laboured exposition. Still one ventures to say that it is a masterpiece, capable of establishing for us a new depth of scriptural interpretation. Unless their symbolic meaning is attained there can be no proper understanding of the Scriptures—that is certain. What is here achieved is a sustained scientific use of that way of understanding.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

**THE ORIGINALITY OF ST MATTHEW: A Critique of the Two-Document Hypothesis.** By B. C. Butler, Abbot of Downside. (Cambridge University Press; 18s.)

Abbot Butler thinks it can be conclusively shown that Matthew, our Greek Matthew in precisely the form we possess, was used as a source by both St Mark and St Luke. If so, the existence of Q becomes a needless supposition, the originality of Mark is disproved, and the two-document theory breaks down. He proceeds by examining successive groups of parallel passages, adducing in each case the reasons for inferring that the Marcan and Lucan passages are dependent on Matthew. The passages where this argument is strongest are taken first, and the case is gradually built up very carefully and methodically. The author's profound scholarship and his wide acquaintance with the immense literature of the synoptic problem are apparent everywhere. It is a great advantage to have the parallel Greek texts printed in full in the chief passages, the normal English type is large, and the whole book is beautifully produced.

The author seldom mentions other views held by Catholics, e.g., the widely held view that St Luke knew Matthew's gospel in an earlier edition, or knew extracts from it, and that Mark is an independent work by which the editor of our extant Matthew was influenced both in wording and matter. He would of course reject both parts of this