

Meng Ke, known to us as Mencius, should have spent his life combating the Daoists and reformulating Confucius's teaching. His ideal was the same: good government, based on wisdom and virtue; reason and goodness, he taught, are natural to man, but both need to be cultivated. The later history of Confucianism, however, brings out its insufficiency as based on natural virtue alone. It lost its earlier theism, it exaggerated ritual and filial piety, and excluded the growth of any real philosophy. But by making explicit the ethics that were implied in the ancient tradition, it had developed the sense of personality, while fitting it into the traditional social pattern.

The last part of the book is an outline of the history of Israel, down to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This outline, as the work of a scholarly Catholic, is based on excellent authorities and given a fully supernatural interpretation.

A few points in this section call for notice. Dr Zacharias puts the Exodus in the thirteenth century, without discussing the possibility—at least—that it took place in the fifteenth. He interprets the older Biblical numbers, both of years and persons, symbolically or conventionally; which of course gets rid of many difficulties. He dates Esdras's arrival in Jerusalem 398, after Nehemias—again without discussion. The death of Herod the Great is given, no doubt by a slip, as A.D. 6, instead of ten years earlier. The book ends with a list of Chinese terms, and some good notes; a glossary of Indian words, also, would have been useful.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

HE DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN. By Charles Williams. (Faber; 16s.)

One is tempted to wish that Charles Williams had lived to hear the Church proclaim the doctrine of the Assumption. Not that he was over-eager to accept the definitions of any organised religious body; indeed, one sometimes wonders when reading his works what faith he really had in organised religion as such. On the other hand, he penetrated far into the meaning and implications of the Incarnation, and the chief *lacuna* in his thought was the inability to 'place' the living and articulate word of God in the twentieth century.

With this latest reprint, the publication of the bulk of his theological works is completed. He is one of those who might be unfortunate enough to be described as 'mystical', and the epithet will do him no good, for he combines that scholarly dislike for vividness of definition which marks most dons, with a certain agnosticism about institutions. This means that his writings become obscure because of the convolutions of his own thought and because from the nature of the case they can invoke no authority which might make them clearer and clinch their arguments. Nevertheless it would

be a great pity if for this reason Charles Williams's work was lost, for everything that he wrote—novels, poetry, and theology—teach, among others, two things which are of paramount importance in the twentieth century. He firmly believed in the power of 'spirit', whether by this he meant angels, devils, or what we call the 'spiritual' in the human make-up. Not that he just believed in ghosts; he was convinced that human love and human faith could govern the conduct and the destinies of mankind. But further than that, he believed that the power of God was greater still, and that the Incarnation changed for ever the face of the earth because God made Man altered the human race *body and soul*. Without falling into the trap of modernism, he found in man some tincture of the divine and he insisted that this transformed the whole person of man. In that sense he was a mystical writer. His mysticism was not a vague woolliness that confined the effects of the Incarnation to some mysterious 'spiritual' area of life. In an important way, therefore, Charles Williams is an important writer for this age, which has split up human life into too many departments and which believes that 'specialisation' in religion or theology or prayer is but another (though rather old-fashioned) department of human thought on the same level as any other kind of research. Charles Williams does make some attempt to show that religion concerns the whole human person and therefore the whole of human life. The growth of this belief must come if religion and religious people are not to be relegated to the museums of the future.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

KIERKEGAARD: *The Melancholy Dane*. By H. V. Martin. (The Epworth Press; 7s. 6d.)

Although this book is short—scarcely above a hundred pages—it is certainly not elementary, and the reader who turns to it in the hope of finding an easy introduction to an often-quoted philosopher, and, by the way, of having his mind clarified on the subject of existentialism, will be doomed to disappointment. What the author does achieve, however, is what, chiefly, he set out to do: stimulate interest in the thought and writings of Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard lived and died a Lutheran Protestant, though he became, with the passing years, more and more dissatisfied with that form of epicurean Christianity taught by the officials of a State Church, until finally, at the age of forty-two, he was in open conflict with the Danish Bishop Martensen, and, in the midst of it, fell suddenly ill and died. He saw many Christians, even devout Church members, living in aesthetical, or at the most ethico-religious, categories belonging to natural religion. This is what he calls