

MORE NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, by C. H. Dodd. *Manchester University Press*, 1968. 157 pp. 30s.

Professor Dodd has once again earned our gratitude. His latest book consists of nine essays, one previously unpublished, one originally published in 1947, and the others all dating from between 1953 and 1962. But to say that eight of the essays had previously been published does not mean that they were all accessible. They had all appeared in various *Festschriften*, and, as is the way with *Festschrift* articles, they had all but disappeared from living memory.

In spite of being made up of miscellaneous writings, this book has an unexpected unity. It might almost be called a practical introduction to Form Criticism. It ranges over most of the New Testament, though the chief interest is in the Gospels, but always with an eye on the primitive Christian tradition and its transmission. But it is not the Form Criticism of its earliest exponents, distorted as it was by rationalistic presuppositions. Professor Dodd's only presuppositions are a keen sense of Christ and the Church, and the demands of precise scholarship.

Moreover, right from the start he was aware of the importance of the individual author. It was only with the rise of *Redaktionsgeschichte* in the early 1950s that attention was paid not only to the individual pericope, but to what the author of the Gospel had done with it; yet in the first essay, written in the early 50s, we find an examination of the difference between the Beatitudes as presented by Matthew and by Luke. It is shown that both are using material that came from the same tradition, but they treat it in different ways, since Matthew is interested in the here-and-now dispositions of the Christian that earn God's approval, while Luke is concerned with the reversal of fortunes of rich and poor that will take place after God's final intervention.

One other essay, on 'The Fall of Jerusalem and the Abomination of Desolation', is also concerned with the Synoptics, comparing Luke's 'Apocalyptic Discourse' with that of

Mark, and showing that while Mark's model was the prophecy of Daniel, Luke's was the account of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar. This leads to a modification of the prevalent view that Luke simply copies and adapts Mark.

Three essays are concerned with John, and all show how early is the tradition underlying the passages examined: the 'parable' of John 5, 19-20, compared with what the Synoptics give us; the long argument between Jesus and his opponents in John 8, 31-58, compared with the Synoptic tradition, and, more interestingly, with Paul's treatment in Galatians of the same controversial issue; and the Prophecy of Caiaphas in John 11, 47-53.

The remaining essays go further afield. That on 'The Primitive Catechesis and the Sayings of Jesus' shows how independent are the Gospels of the 'Catechesis' of the early Church, in spite of this being the main channel by which the Gospel material was handed down. One entitled *Ennomos Kristou* shows how 'even for Paul, with his strong sense of the immediate governance of Christ through his Spirit in the Church, that which the Lord "commanded" and "ordained" remains the solid, historical and creative nucleus of the whole'. In 'The Historical Problem of the Death of Jesus', Professor Dodd examines the sources we have for the death of Jesus outside the Gospels, and compares this with what the Gospels say. Once again his conclusion is sensibly conservative; the Gospels are historically reliable, and should be credited with more 'history' than the critics usually allow. Finally, in the longest essay in the book, Professor Dodd examines all scriptural and apocryphal passages that deal with the 'Appearances of the Risen Christ'. Using Form Critical methods he makes a number of admirably commonsense judgments, concludes that the term 'myth' is inapplicable to the Gospel accounts, and that they merit the same degree of critical consideration as other passages, 'not only in

their aspect as witnesses to the faith of the early Church, but also as ostensible records of things that happened'.

The MUP is to be congratulated on the elegant production of this volume. It is a pity that there are a few misprints: I noticed Mark 3, 8 instead of 3, 28 (p. 98); smiliarities (p. 119);

Caphas for Cephas (p. 125); and an iota subscript omitted on p. 139. The price would have frightened me a year or two ago, but I suppose that it is alright in present conditions; at least the buyer can be sure of getting value for his money.

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THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE, by Oswald Loretz. *Burns and Oates*, London, 1968. 182 pp. 30s.
UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL RESEARCH, by Luis Alonso Schökel, S.J. *Burns and Oates*, London, 1968. 130 pp. 16s.

The main thesis of O. Loretz's book is that the 'truth of the Bible' ought to be understood according to the meaning of the word 'truth' in the Bible itself. The author finds that in the Old and New Testaments the word means fundamentally 'faithfulness', and that when it is predicated of God it means God being faithful or true to his word (p. 87). Although there are 'truths' in the Bible in our sense, they are all regarded in Sacred Scripture 'in their connexion with a single great truth, namely the faithfulness of God' (p. 91). This thesis occupies the middle pages. The earlier part of the book prepares the way by showing how the basis of God's truth—that is his faithfulness—is the covenant, which God made and constantly renewed with his people. In the latter part the author extends this idea to the Church. Traditionally, the truth of the Bible has been understood as intellectual truth, or freedom from error. This conception, says our author, has come in from Philo and Augustine, and imposes 'a perfectionist ideal of truth which is foreign to the Bible itself' (p. 169). Attempts to defend the Bible as true, in the sense of free from all errors of fact, have become increasingly desperate and unsuccessful. In Loretz's opinion there is no reason why the Church should go on trying. All she needs to maintain is the 'truth' in accordance with the meaning in the Bible itself. Moreover the Church's own conception of itself as true, or infallible, should also be understood in the biblical sense of God being faithful to his people (pp. 155-6).

The book was first published in German in 1964 and was partly responsible for the insertion of the word '*veritas*' in the second Vatican Council's constitution *De Divina Revelatione*. Loretz was much quoted during those feverish autumn days of 1966 in Rome when Catholic biblical scholars were struggling to get something more credible and positive in the schema on Sacred Scripture than the old bogey '*inerrantia*'. Several commentators since have argued that *veritas* in the Council document

itself (11 and 19) is to be understood in accordance with Loretz's thesis.

Whatever one may think of the ramifications of the argument, the central idea is in a familiar vein. Loretz is among those biblical theologians who think that individual words somehow have a theological content, and that the word finds its ultimate significance as a predicate of God, all other uses in some way sharing in this supreme meaning. The word in this case is *aletheia* which is not to be understood from a Greek dictionary but—and this is also characteristic—from a study of the Hebrew word '*emet*' which it translates. Greek and Hebrew conceptions are sharply contrasted. Readers already persuaded of this linguistic theology from authors like Kittel or Torrance will find Loretz satisfactory reading. There are, however, some pertinent criticisms of this idea, of which Loretz may have heard. For the ominous name of James Barr twice appears upon the steep bank of footnotes that bear up the main thesis. On p. 84 Loretz makes his point about *aletheia* and how most often it translates '*emet*' and then refers to Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Literature* which an unsuspecting reader might suppose supports the point. But on turning up the reference it appears that the words are not Barr's at all but part of a quotation Barr is making from Hebert and Torrance whose interpretation he then proceeds to demolish. The very argument Loretz is asserting is anticipated by Barr and attacked as a fundamental confusion (pp. 187ff). Barr is also quoted on p. 82, note 22, apparently in support of the idea that the *sensus fundamentalis* of '*emet*' is firmness or stability. The appropriate place in Barr (p. 165) shows that this is precisely the point he is contesting. After this it is not surprising that Loretz finds no room for the obvious meaning of *aletheia* in Jud. 9, 15 and Luke 22, 59 or of '*emet*' in 1 Kings 10, 6. Altogether this does not further one's confidence in the stages of Loretz's argument nor in the footnotes that grow prodigiously from page to page.