

THIRD PERSON

CANON JOHN TAYLOR must surely be reckoned one of the most remarkable minds in the Church of England. His first major book, "The Growth of the Church in Buganda," remains the most sensitive and penetrating account of a "younger Church." This was followed by "The Primal Vision," a beautiful appreciation of what we are pleased to call "primitive African religion" that is already something of a classic.

Readers of the "CMS Newsletter" are edified once a month by a running commentary on the gospel in the world at once comprehensive, representative and highly personal. In between times, it seems, Canon Taylor leads the CMS as its general secretary and also earns by hard work the right to criticise the Ecumenical Movement from inside. Nor does this partial catalogue do justice either to the poetic, almost fey, quality of his imagination or to the disciplined fidelity to a deeply studied Holy Scripture on which that imagination plays.

In 1967 the authorities at Birmingham University invited Canon Taylor to give the Edward Cadbury Lectures. He chose as his topic "The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission," and the lectures have now been re-written as *The Go-between God*. That lectureship has already evoked some distinguished works of theology; though its manner and mood are unusual and it lacks the academic trappings, *The Go-between God* is another in the series.

THE GO-BETWEEN GOD. By John V. Taylor. (SCM Press. £1.95)

Canon Taylor's theme is not easily summarised. He writes, he says, out of a conviction that we need above all to recover a sense of "beyond-ness" in the whole of life if we are to revive the springs of wonder and adoration.

By
DAVID M. PATON

In this love-affair with life—with things and persons both—there is an anonymous third person who makes the introduction and acts as go-between, not acting on each from outside but activating each from within. To this invisible go-between Christians give the name Holy Spirit, and this was the Spirit that so dominated and possessed the man Jesus Christ.

The theme, thus baldly indicated, is illuminated in successive chapters from one point of view after another. The early chapters are about seeing life, and are not "specifically Christian" at all. Then, shortly after, come several marvellous pages about our Lord himself. The second half of the book deals more with "practical matters," and ends with a chapter about prayer and stillness, called "Loving."

The book is not easy reading, because one is driven again and again to stop reading in order to see and

think. Long after my train had passed the cooling-towers at Didcot and the aluminium sheds beside them, beautiful in the winter sunshine, I went on seeing them to be as much works of the Lord as the trees nearby; and a few pages later was pushed off at a tangent into thinking quite freshly about how to prepare a service for the staff of our local department store.

The book's power is due to its personal character—it is, among other things, more obviously autobiographical than Canon Taylor's earlier writings. There is no accident about this. In an unexpected meditation on Pentecost he asks:

"(As they waited) did Peter then turn to John, Andrew to Philip, to share the despair that was in them? That would have been a deeper confrontation than they had allowed one another before. . . . And so he was there—the Spirit—where the 'one' and the 'one' was more than 'two.' . . . All we are told to do is to wait. But what matters is that the Spirit should be allowed to give the profound openness and communion in which he is present."

Fourth Gospel

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. Edited by Barnabas Lindars, SSF. (Olivants, £6.75)

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL has evoked many notable commentaries. A distinctive place among them now belongs to this volume of the "New Century Bible." The head of the Anglican Franciscan house in Cambridge has been able to treat the Gospel on a worthy scale; the price represents roughly a penny a page, and the Gospel text is not reprinted. Marked by lucidity and coolness of judgment, his book brings out the depth and force of Johannine teaching.

Brother Barnabas sounds the doctrinal depths through a careful investigation of the making of the Gospel. For many readers this will be the least familiar aspect of his approach, and it is here that he often makes new suggestions. He attempts to reconstruct the pre-history of each section of the Gospel, tracing originally isolated sayings and narratives through their redeployment in St. John's sources and in successive editions of his Gospel.

A number of current theories are kept in critical view as Brother Barnabas gives his own explanations of how the text reached its present form. It is a fascinating and fruitful exercise to follow his arguments, even though, as he himself allows, it may sometimes be possible to differ. The important place newly given here to these questions sets the reader *au fait* with modern study of the Gospel, and makes him keenly aware of the historical setting within which the present text must be understood.

★

BROTHER BARNABAS'S work here leads him away from the strong emphasis on the historical value of this Gospel often found in recent study. He follows and enlarges on earlier writers in suggesting many places where deeds of Christ form St. John's starting-point. He concludes, however, that the evangelist's handling of this material is so free that little reliability can be attributed to his presentation and ordering of events. Yet, Brother Barnabas says, it is still possible to claim that "no one has grasped the meaning of Jesus better than John."

The commentary is especially helpful on textual and historical points, with an unusually full treatment of archaeology and things relating to the Hebraic background. Brother Barnabas is nevertheless well aware that these matters are preliminary to the main task of understanding St. John's teaching. He tells how his interest in the Gospel was first aroused when he used to expound it in a disused oast-house during Bible studies for a mission to hop-pickers.

His book is dedicated to the memory of the former leader of this mission, the late Brother Peter, SSF. As the dedication suggests, the ample annotation and judicious guidance offered here are designed to let the evangelist's message have free course.

JOSEPH ROBINSON

WILLIAM HORBURY

Cromwellian

By CHARLES SMYTH

RETICENT, austere and self-reliant, Dr. John Owen (1616-1683) is not a tempting subject for a biographer. Yet he was, in his way, a key-figure in the history of England under the Protectorate.

S. R. Gardiner could claim that Cromwell's policy for a settlement of religion was "conceived in the mind of Owen, and reduced to practical shape by Oliver"; and Tulloch ranks him with Howe and Baxter as one of the three outstanding theologians of English Puritanism. A scholarly biography of this eminent Congregational divine has long been needed; and nobody could write it better than Dr. Peter Toon, who is a specialist in this field and has already edited Owen's Correspondence.

The son of an Oxfordshire parson with Nonconformist leanings, John Owen graduated from Queen's College at an early age, published a book against Arminianism (1643), married, and became a Presbyterian minister in Essex. Then, at the age of thirty, when he was already tending towards Congregationalism, he preached a fast-day sermon in April, 1646, before the House of Commons in St. Margaret's Westminster.

Thereafter he became a celebrated preacher, and was taken up by Oliver Cromwell, whom he accompanied as an army chaplain in Ireland and in Scotland. In 1650 Parliament made him Dean of Christ Church; and Cromwell, as Chancellor of Oxford University, constrained him to accept

GOD'S STATESMAN: THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHN OWEN. By Peter Toon. (Paternoster Press, Exeter, £2.60).

the Vice-Chancellorship (1652-7). During these years Owen was active and influential in religious matters beyond his academic duties.

But the friendship cooled in 1657, when Owen, who was no time-serving politician, conscientiously opposed the idea that Oliver should become King. He further harmed himself, and lost his deanery, through his involvement (again on grounds of principle) in the overthrow of Richard Cromwell. After the Restoration he was, until his death in 1683, a Dissenting pastor in and about London. Shielded by powerful friends, he was able to act as an important link between the scattered and harassed Independent churches, and also to give more time to writing. He had always been a prolific author, although distinguished rather by intellectual earnestness than by any literary grace; but mercifully Dr. Toon provides a handy outline of his major works.

John Owen may have left little mark upon the seventeenth-century University of Oxford, and as a controversialist he is outdated; but in many ways he was in advance of his age, and it is noteworthy that his aspirations for a union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists have in our time borne fruit.

ANOTHER RSV

WE are today all consumers, and therefore aware of the importance of shopping around to purchase what we need in the best and cheapest market. Indeed, Consumers' Associations exist to recommend to us what is the best buy for some particular product.

To date they have not turned their attention to Bibles, but it looks as though the time will come when they may well do so. The prospective purchaser of a Bible is now confronted not only with a large number of translations to choose from, but also with a growing number of editions of each translation.

This latest Bible from Nelson's is their second edition of the familiar Revised Standard Version. This is what the publishers claim on the dust-cover, but in point of fact the claim is only partially true. This Bible contains the second edition of the New Testament of the RSV. Its Old Testament is unchanged, and the Apocrypha is not printed.

The second-edition New Testament is in fact little changed from the first

THE HOLY BIBLE: Revised Standard Version. Second Edition. (Nelson, £1.50)

edition. The longer ending of Mark (xvi, 9-20) has been restored to the text, as has the Pericope de Adultera to St. John (vii, 53-viii, 11). In the translation itself the change which is likely to strike the reader most is at Luke xiv, 5, where Jesus now asks: "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the sabbath day?" For the most part the RSV rendering which we already know remains unchanged.

The question of "best buy" is particularly acute in relationship to this edition of the RSV. Collins have recently published their own edition called "The Common Bible" at the same price, and they have included the Apocrypha. The Nelson edition has no Apocrypha, but it does include a set of explanatory notes, called "Bible Study Helps," which some readers will appreciate.

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