

*The Ministry of Reconciliation.* By J. R. GILLIES, D.D. (A. & C. Black, London.)

THESE lectures were first prepared as a course on what is usually called Pastoral Theology for Divinity students. They have the slightly rhetorical form, the personal note, the wide scholarly interest, the lucidity and genial warmth of insistency which must have made them admirable for that particular purpose. But few can be so far advanced in the ministry as to be beyond learning from them in their present form. Their great merit is that, without a shadow of egotism, they display a ripe, chastened, charitable mind, interested in men and in books, which will be inspiration as well as counsel for those who follow the same calling. Nor is the work altogether outside the layman's province, if he is interested in seeing how large an experience may go to the preaching of an essentially simple gospel. The ministry of the future may have other problems for which it may require other answers and other methods, but those who have innovated most usefully have always learned from the past most largely. Nor can there ever be a ministry which would not miss much if it lacked Dr Gillies's sincere and devout and quiet spirit; nor can it ever present any gospel successfully except in the same humble confidence in its message and not in itself.

JOHN OMAN.

*Der Sohn Gottes: eine Untersuchung über den Charakter und die Tendenz des Johannes-Evangeliums; zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Heilandsgestalten der Antike.* Von GILLIS P:SON WETTER. (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1916.)

READERS of this JOURNAL have already been introduced to the Stockholm Professor of the History of Religions by Dr Bethune-Baker, and it is a safe assumption that a welcome will be accorded by them to his latest incursion into the field of Fourth Gospel research. I say advisedly 'his latest incursion'; its two predecessors (*Ich bin das Licht der Welt* and *Ich bin es*) are referred to by Dr Wetter in a foot-note, but these, to my regret, I have not seen, and although the work which lies before me—it is included in the series *Forschungen zur Religion des Alten und Neuen Testaments*—reached me shortly after publication, I was at the time unable to do more than dip into its pages.

As we are told in a brief Preface, the task which Dr Wetter sets himself is 'einen Beitrag dazu zu liefern, das geschichtliche Milieu des Joh.-Evgls. möglichst konkret darzustellen'; not until such a task is

adequately performed, he urges, 'ist ein Verständnis des Evglms. überhaupt möglich', and to this, I fancy, many will assent. The lines on which he proposes to strike out being specifically his own, there is small fear, he remarks, of coming into collision with other scholars.

I pass to his Introduction. With a rapid glance at the diversity of view illustrated by modern Fourth Gospel criticism—'it is scarcely possible to speak of any one standpoint'—he turns away from conceptions of the Gospel as 'a great allegory' and fastens on what is deemed by him a radical defect of the several partition-theories which persist. He lays it down that whatever 'Unordnung' there appears to be, and more particularly in the Discourse-sections, is not really such; once modern standards are discarded it is patent that behind a superficial lack of sequence and conception there lies not seldom a unity of thought: the fact, we are told, is 'dass wir es mit formelhaftem Gut zu tun haben, das nicht vom Verfasser geprägt, sondern einfach von ihm übernommen worden ist'. Thus are we brought face to face with the hypothesis which Dr Wetter is strenuous to uphold; with a rigorous scrutiny of details, he says, conjecture becomes certainty that the Gospel 'voll ist von Formeln und heiligen Worten, aber auch von Gedanken und Vorstellungen, die es nicht als erstes geprägt hat', but which had long been current coin in the piety of Hellenistic circles. Not that the Gospel is rendered fully intelligible from this point of view alone—criticism has to reckon with more possibilities than are generally allowed—: it nevertheless holds good, not for side issues only, but for that which is central in the Gospel, the contention (positively in order to compel belief and negatively as a polemic against rival claimants) that Jesus is Son of God. Deep significance, it is pleaded, attaches to the circumstance that, to all appearance, He was by no means the first to give Himself out as such or to have it predicated of Him; the question, in short, is of 'ein Begriff' 'der schon vor dem 4. Evglm. festgeprägt und also schon ein technischer Terminus war, als er hier auf Jesus übertragen wurde'. Dr Wetter adds with assurance: 'Dadurch gewinnen wir nicht nur einen Einblick in die Bedeutung einer der wichtigsten Vorstellungen des Joh.-Evglms., sondern auch "der Charakter und die Tendenz" der Schrift erhalten dadurch eine neue, kräftige Beleuchtung'.

His main thesis thus set forth, he proceeds to marshal a formidable array of evidences which, in his opinion, amount to conclusive proof; and when I say that, with abundance of citation and allusion and a starting-point found in the remarks of Celsus (*Orig. c. Cels.* vii) on self-styled prophets met with by him in Syria and Palestine, Dr Wetter treats exhaustively of titles and designations which, claimed by or for these and the like personages, attached themselves in particular to one

'Gestalt' pre-eminently conspicuous in the Hellenistic piety of the age, there is, I take it, little need for me to say more of the many pages in which he essays to shew how features presented by the 'Gottessöhne' of antiquity are discoverable in the Jesus Son of God who looms large in the Fourth Gospel. I pass on without delay to his closing chapter; and it is to find him saying that his case is proved to conclusiveness inasmuch as wellnigh every lineament characteristic of the 'Gestalt' of Hellenistic piety is discoverable in the portrait of the Johannine Christ. Herein, we are told, lies the explanation of the contrast, not indeed to be exaggerated but none the less obvious, between the Johannine and the Synoptic representation: Christianity had made its way from Palestine into another world, and for those who moved in Johannine circles a Messiah would have been unintelligible; there was accordingly a need so to transfigure Jesus that, room made for historical reminiscences, He should respond to yearnings after One who, by his coming down to earth had brought salvation, for a Saviour who, since none but God could give of the divine to man, was really God Himself. Unquestionably, it is said, there are marked differences between the Johannine Christ-portrait and those of Hellenistic 'Heilande'; it remains true that, in all externals, the former is that of 'ein echt antiker "Sohn Gottes"'; as such he is held by the believer; it might indeed be asserted that the Gospel was written for the express purpose of awakening such a conviction. Outward resemblances notwithstanding, the contrast is sharp: Jesus transcends all other claimants to 'Gottessohnschaft' in the ancient world: 'Es ist nicht nur ein hellenistischer Gottessohn, der uns in dieser Schrift entgegentritt. Mehrere Momente haben wir zwar jedes für sich in der antiken Welt wiedergefunden. In ihrer Gesamtwirkung aber stellen sie uns ein einzigartiges Bild vor Augen, das Jesusbild, das bald das Christentum beherrschende geworden ist, weil es am besten der Frömmigkeit dieser Menschen genügen konnte'. There is an Appendix: 'Zur Frage der Herkunft des Titels "Gottessohn" im Hellenismus'.

Of such sort is the gist of Dr Wetter's book. Were space available I should gladly enlarge on passages which I have certainly found interesting, ingenious, and suggestive; let me instance those which treat of the significance of the Johannine 'signs' (p. 69), of Johannine Christians met by objections easy to rebut had there been any knowledge of stories of the 'Virgin-birth' (p. 97), of *πίστις* and *γνώσις* (pp. 131 ff), of difficulty arising from the charge of blasphemy at once eliminated with the recognition that a feature prominent in later controversies has been read back into the reports of the Trial—'all becomes plain if the *υἱὸς θεοῦ*, an anachronism where it stands, be taken in its Hellenistic significance'. But it must suffice to give some impressions of the work as a whole.

Illustrating a mass of learning on the part of its author, and at the least amply fulfilling the promise of its subsidiary title, it is, so it seems to me, a contribution to the subject by no means to be ignored; where some might use the word plausible of it, I prefer to say that it is not invariably persuasive; while I freely allow Dr Wetter's claims to scholarship I am not so sure on the score of unerring judgement. Read with discrimination the book well repays perusal; and in any case it shews how many stages have been traversed since the day when, in his *Geschichte des Lebens Jesu* (1842), Ammon threw out hints of such a transference to Ephesian soil of the Jesus who taught at Capernaum as should win for Him acceptance from minds cast in Hellenistic moulds.

H. LATIMER JACKSON.

*Legends of Babylon and Egypt in relation to Hebrew Tradition*, by L. W. KING ('Schweich Lectures' for 1916). (Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, London, 1918.)

THE late Dr Leonard King has given us in his 'Legends of Babylon' by far the best book that has been written on Noah's Flood since the first discovery of cuneiform writing and literature. For a long time Babylonian and Assyriological study was but ill co-ordinated with scientific Biblical research. It is not yet fifty years ago since George Smith announced his discovery of the 'Chaldean Account of the Deluge' (Dec. 3, 1872). There were many at first who were only too eager to use the new lore as a counterblast to geological science and Biblical criticism. At last the Stones were crying out, and it was understood that they were crying out against the critics. Owing to this, and also to the unfamiliarity of the syllabic and ideographic script, and to the absence of sound grammatical tradition for the languages themselves, the older scholarship fought rather shy of Assyriology and left it too much to the adventurous, the enthusiasts, and the amateurs, and (worst of all) to those who had had less than full training in other branches of Semitic research.

The last thirty years have seen great changes in this as in all other departments of human activity. The older learning has become accustomed to 'Assyriology'. It has learnt to be reconciled to the legitimacy of a Semitic language which had actually lost almost all its characteristic gutturals long before the days of Moses. The students of the cuneiform documents on their part have gradually raised their study to the rank of a science. A few bilingual tablets in Greek and Babylonian have been discovered, small indeed and broken, but enough to shew that the principles of cuneiform writing had been correctly divined.