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# KING'S

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# Theological Review

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Synoptic Transfigurations: Mark 9, 2-10 and Partners <i>Stuart Hall</i>	41
Nature and Gender: An Anthropological Perspective <i>Nancy Tapper</i>	45
Doing Systematic Theology <i>Christoph Schwöbel</i>	51
C. J. Blomfield, Bishop of London, 1828-1856 <i>Andrew Tatham</i>	58
Kant and Job's Comforters: A Review Article <i>Charles Bigger</i>	62
BOOK REVIEWS	64
FACULTY NEWS Insert	

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### 1 and 2 Kings

G. H. Jones. *The New Century Bible Commentary* (two volumes). Marshall, Morgan & Scott. np.

Dr Jones, the Reader in Biblical Studies in the University College of North Wales at Bangor, is to be congratulated on this substantial commentary. It is a major piece of scholarship that must have involved years of careful and detailed work. It is printed in two separate volumes, though it is one book. Volume 1 contains the Introduction and the commentary on 1 Kings, 1-16. The second volume completes the commentary, 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 25. The two volumes thus need to be used together.

The introduction concentrates on five aspects of the Book of Kings. First, the textual tradition of the Hebrew and Greek is surveyed. Then the complex and difficult subject of chronology is reviewed. Kings contains seemingly careful statements of the length of the reigns of each of the Kings of Israel and Judah. It ought to be relatively easy therefore, to date all the reigns. Unfortunately the numbers of years do not add up correctly so as to fit together. Just why the numbers do not agree, what this means for our estimation of the writer or editor of Kings as a historian are questions that have received very different answers from scholars. Next, there follows a discussion of the Deuteronomists and their part in the creation of Kings. Appropriately this is followed by a description of the sources that have been used in the writing of the book. The Introduction ends with a summary of the theology of Kings.

The commentary is based on the text of the RSV, though frequently reference is made to the different translations of other versions, principally with NEB and NIV. In the commentary a great range of subjects is dealt with; matters of geography and the identification of place names, the administration of the Hebrew kingdoms, relevant material from the Aramaean kingdoms and the Assyrian empire, and the relatively more domestic concerns of the differences between Kings and Chronicles. On this latter issue probably the most important point is that Dr Jones agrees with Chronicles against Kings that Josiah's reform was a two-stage movement. The first stage began early in the reign as part of a general policy of reviving nationalism. This was followed some years later by a second reform that followed the finding of the law book.

In general Dr Jones' commentary concentrates, as does the introduction, on the process of the creation of the book of Kings. Less attention is paid to the final product. So, in the discussion on many parts of the book more attention is paid to identifying the sources that underlie the present text than with dealing with the narrative as it stands. This means that the reader who is aiming to study intensively some part of the text of the book of Kings will find all that he or she requires in this commentary. The student wishing to read Kings as a whole and looking for guidance through the whole book may well feel that the great concentration on individual trees has obscured the sense of the wood. Different commentaries serve different purposes and this is very

much a commentary for those interested in detail.

Joseph Robinson

### Johannine Christianity

D. Moody Smith. T. & T. Clark, 1987. Pp. xix + 233. £12.95 (hb)

Even for those deeply immersed in the task, still more for newcomers or occasional visitors, the paths of modern scholarship in the study of the Gospel and Epistles of John may present a bewildering maze. Few of those who are close to the ground have the ability both to see and to present a coherent map of the whole. Professor Moody Smith is one of those few; himself long active in the field he here, in ten essays spanning nearly 20 years, maps the past trends in scholarship. Yet he also has the gift of seeing within the map signposts pointing to a common destination. His initial essay on Johannine Christianity, first published over ten years ago, drew from the complex mass of Johannine study a coherent profile which can now be recognised as the point to which we have come. Other essays on the sources of the Gospel, including its relationship with the Synoptic Gospels, have an equally familiar ring about them – thus the author largely affirms the existence of a miracle or “signs” source and questions John's knowledge and use of the Synoptics although the Gospel “did not take shape in complete isolation of them”.

Although references to German works are not lacking, the topics covered represent the concerns of English and French speaking scholarship, with, for example, little discussion of recent German redactional studies. Those familiar with “history of the community” approaches to John will not find themselves on strange territory here, but neither will they meet alternative views of the development of Christology and ecclesiology in the Johannine communities based on theories of layers of subsequent redaction of the Gospel. The names which dominate the index are those of Barrett, Brown, Lindars and Martyn rather than Becker, Richter, Thyen or de Jonge (who is not mentioned).

Yet *Johannine Christianity* is not merely a review of scholarship, useful as that would be. Even outside the two overtly “theological” (and more popular) essays, theological concerns are important. Whether John intended to correct one or more of the Synoptics or whether its highly individual picture of Jesus was largely misunderstood by those who included it in the Canon are not just literary and historical questions but have important theological consequences for an understanding of the Canon. Now within the Canon, “whatever may have been the case in antiquity, the riddle of the Fourth Gospel can finally be answered adequately only by those who know the other three” (196). Despite having given so much of his scholarly career to John, Moody Smith is fully aware of the distortions of the Christian faith potential within the Gospel if it is taken on its own: “it represents a very narrow view, theologically and existentially . . . It may, and I think it does, contain its moment of eternal truth – but it does not provide a complete or adequate perspective for all seasons” (208-9).

Moody Smith reflects the tendencies of the period covered by these essays in his fundamental assumption

that a book entitled “Johannine Christianity” can focus almost exclusively on the Gospel. References to the Epistles are few (the omission of a Biblical index beyond Colossians, presumably by printing error, prohibits a statement of how few), although their separate authorship and subsequent date to the Gospel are assumed. New tracks are now being made in Johannine scholarship which give greater place to the Epistles as a source for discovering Johannine Christianity, and the map is likely to change. Yet because of the moderation and the clarity of exposition, even of detailed and complex positions, this is a valuable presentation of the current map in Johannine study for the expert and non-expert alike.

Judith Lieu

### **Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles. A sociological approach**

Francis Watson. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 56, CUP, 1986. Pp. xii + 246. £22.50 (hb)

Even within the era of historical-critical studies the standing of the apostle Paul as one of the great theologians of the New Testament period has rarely been disputed. This view of Paul is confronted head-on in this succinct and challenging monograph which originated in an Oxford doctorate under the late Prof. Caird.

Building on the work of E. P. Sanders and others on Judaism and the law, and on Graham Shaw’s non-specialist study of Paul (*The Cost of Authority*, London, 1983), Paul is understood as an opportunistic missionary worker, willing to make strategic theological concessions so long as his law-free Gentile mission prospers. His goal is to bring about a complete separation of the Christian community from Judaism, thus turning the former from being a “reform movement” within Judaism into an independent sect. This strategy reflects Paul’s own experience in which he first preached to the Jews, but turned to the Gentiles when he was rejected by his former co-religionists. To ensure that the Gentile mission was not a similar failure, the demand to accept unpalatable parts of the law was consciously abandoned, and thus the Gentile mission involved the deliberate separation of the church from the synagogue. On the basis of this reconstruction it is argued that it is a mistake to understand Paul’s writings as those of a theologian (the Lutheran view of Paul comes under particularly sharp and constant criticism); rather, Paul’s thought is only coherent in terms of his missionary strategy.

The history of the issue of the law in the Pauline mission in Galatia, Philippi and Corinth is reconstructed, and the apostle is seen wheeling and dealing for the survival of his law-free Gentile mission. The major test for this interpretation is, of course, Romans. The key is found in the relationship between the “weak” and the “strong” of 14:1-15:13. These groupings are not factions within one church but separate congregations, divided over the question of the law. The Jewish Christian group still regard themselves as a “reform movement” within Judaism and Paul now tries to persuade them to make the

final break from Judaism and become a “Paulinist” sect. The two congregations are to be brought together – in common worship (15:6) – on Paul’s terms. The principle of freedom from the law must be accepted, and so the letter as a whole is primarily aimed at Roman Jewish Christians, the remnants of the original Jewish Christian community in the city. Chs. 1-11 is not a sustained theological argument but a theoretical legitimation for the social reorientation called for in 14:1ff. Thus 1:16, often taken as a theological summary of the letter, acknowledges the priority and pre-eminence of the Jewish Christian congregation (“for the Jew first”) and affirms the legitimacy of the Gentile Christian community (“and also for the Greek”).

The main sections of the letter are then expounded under the headings, drawn from the sociological analysis of sectarian mentality, of denunciation, antithesis and reinterpretation. Thus, in ch. 2 Jewish leaders are denounced for the belief that they are saved by virtue of the covenant without regard for their moral failure. (Paul does not “misunderstand” Judaism as a legalistic religion but attacks it as it actually was, a strong point in this reconstruction.) Ch. 3 focuses on the antithesis between “works of the law”, the Jewish way of life, and “faith”, the principle which unites Jewish and Gentile Christians in sectarian separation from the Jewish community. In ch. 4 Jewish history is reinterpreted in favour of the new sect. In ch. 7 Paul attempts to wean his readers from Judaism by demonstrating the dire consequences of the law in practice, while making some concessions concerning its theoretical goodness. In chs. 9-11 he answers the two-fold charge of Roman Jewish Christians that he is indifferent to the fate of his own people, and that God acts inconsistently by transferring his affections to Gentile Christians. Paul’s argumentation is not consistent here, particularly in ch. 11, but as long as the Jewish Christians are willing to accept Paul’s call to join with Gentile Christians, concessions can be made. (Chs. 12-13 are not discussed, presumably because they were not felt to be relevant to the line of enquiry. However they might also provide evidence of a letter with a more general character than is argued here. It is at least curious that Paul chose to separate his concrete appeal for one Pauline sect in 14:1ff. from his argumentation in chs. 1-11).

This monograph presents a brilliant and highly plausible historical reconstruction of the Pauline mission with regard to the law. Refreshingly it makes full use of the scraps of historical knowledge available from secular sources, and its application of sociological models is generally not doctrinaire. It has many interesting hypotheses on individual cruxes (though at times one feels as if one is on a tour of celebrated Pauline problems) and its polemic is often to the point (nb. the critiques of *sola gratia* and *sola fide* as summaries of Paul’s thought).

Less satisfactory is the constant implication that to have demonstrated the social function of the Pauline text is to have interpreted it adequately. While the theoretical possibility of theological interpretation is left open, it is not pursued. Paul’s only motivation in his argumentation is said to be the furthering of his sect; his theological language and argument are merely code for his missionary strategy. Thus “faith” has no content other than adherence to the view that Jews and Gentiles

should join in one law-free community, and, to return to 1:16 again, “God’s righteousness” and the gospel play no part in the current argument. In order to interpret Paul adequately the historical and sociological approach taken here needs to be supplemented by questioning from the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, the enquiry into Paul’s symbolic world. The final result here is a view of Paul as merely a pragmatist, whose mission is fired solely by his own desire to succeed. Nevertheless, despite this onesidedness, born of a desire to maximize the attention to the social context of Paul’s letters, this is a most important contribution to the current re-evaluation of Paul’s thought.

D. V. Way

### **Gehorsam and Unabhängigkeit. Eine sozialpsychologische Studie zu Paulus**

Walter Rebell. Chr. Kaiser, 1986. Pp. 180. n/p

There is currently an increasing sense among Pauline scholars that the older, theologically-motivated approaches to the apostle have serious shortcomings. They emphasize those aspects of Paul’s proclamation which seem to be most readily translatable into contemporary terms, and in doing so they turn him into a supra-historical figure whose links with his first-century context are ultimately merely superficial. Understandable though this may be, the result is that Paul ceases to be a being of flesh-and-blood, belonging to a particular, unique social context. It is not only in christology that docetism is an ever-present threat.

Walter Rebell’s social-psychological study of “obedience and independence” in Paul’s relations with others is one among a number of recent attempts to redress this particular balance. The author explains that in contrast to the older, more or less worthless attempts to describe the psychological character traits of the apostle, a social-psychological approach concentrates on his relationships with others. Thus, the three main sections of the book are devoted to Paul’s relations with the Jerusalem church, with his fellow-workers, and with his congregations. The author’s method is first to give a brief and clear explanation of the social-psychological theory to be employed, and then to show how it can shed light on the Pauline texts. A few examples will illustrate how this works in practice, although brief summaries will hardly do them justice.

One of the main theories employed distinguishes between “symmetrical” and “complementary” types of interpersonal relationship. The former is characterized by equality between the partners; the latter, by a distinction between superior and inferior partners. The latter can of course be transformed into the former (for example, in the parent-child relationship when the child becomes an adult). Rebell makes use of this essentially very simple contrast in a variety of contexts. He argues that Paul’s relationship with the Jerusalem church was dominated by Paul’s desire for “symmetry” rather than “complementarity”, and by Jerusalem’s reluctance to concede this. In other cases, however, it is Paul who is the dominant partner in complementary relationships. His reference to a father-son relationship with Timothy

shows that the latter never attained (or was never allowed to attain) spiritual independence and maturity – unlike Titus. The same contrast between complementarity and symmetry is also to be found in Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian congregation. At first this was characterized by complementarity, and this is still assumed in I Corinthians. However, II Corinthians suggests that the congregation demanded greater independence (the transformation of complementarity into symmetry), while Paul wished to maintain the relationship in its old form. One should therefore not take Paul’s own view of the controversy in terms of “obedience” and “disobedience” at face value. In Romans, too, Paul attempts to establish a complementary relationship between himself and the Roman church. The initial suggestion of symmetry in 1.12 (“. . . that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”) gives way to complementarity in 15.29 (“I know that when I come to you I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ”), although Paul knows that he is being somewhat audacious (“very bold”, 15.15) in writing to the Romans in this vein.

One of the merits of this approach is its ability to find significance in unlikely places. Thus, Paul’s characteristic thanksgivings for the faith of his congregations are typically seen as a mere conventional politeness. But Rebell undertakes a careful social-psychological analysis of “power” (which is to be understood in a neutral, non-pejorative sense), and one form which this may take is the power to bestow rewards – including praise. The thanksgivings indirectly praise the respective congregations, and thus serve to express and reinforce Paul’s authority over them. This illustrates the point, far too little noted by commentators, that one must explore the implicit function of a text within Paul’s relationship to the relevant congregation, as well as its explicit content.

Rebell covers a great deal of ground and draws on a wide range of social psychological insights. Many of his conclusions are, in a sense, experimental in nature, and hardly constitute definitive and complete explanations of the phenomena in question. Sometimes one feels that the generally simple theoretical models are too crude to do justice to the complexity of the issues. For example, Rebell is no doubt right to claim that there are sound psychological reasons why Barnabas might have become jealous of Paul and so opposed him at Antioch (Gal.2.13) – but the interpretation of this event is beset with so many problems that one wonders whether a simple explanation in terms of jealousy is really of much help. Sometimes the alleged psychological laws themselves seem highly questionable: is it really true, as we are told on p. 144, that changes of outlook (i.e. conversions) do not normally last long, or is this dependent on a complex set of variables?

However, the real significance of Rebell’s book lies not in the plausibility or otherwise of its detailed conclusions, but in the range of new avenues it opens up for future research.

Francis Watson

## The Second and Third Epistles of John

Judith Lieu. T. & T. Clarke, 1986. Pp. x + 264. £13.95 (hb)

One of the most prominent trends in recent New Testament studies has been the identification of the character and situation of the Christian communities lying behind the various writings which have come down to us. There is no denying that when this approach is used in relation to the Gospels, hypothesis and speculation easily take over the field. There has been a number of works on this subject which excite the imagination but must fail, for lack of hard evidence, wholly to satisfy the intellect. It is not even certain that works like the Gospels have the potentiality of revealing such information. It is not foolish to suggest that where matters of social status or conflicts of power appear in the story of Jesus, these reflect realities in the author's church; but it is unwarrantable to dismiss other possible explanations of this material.

With regard to none of the Gospels has there been more resolute and attractive work along these lines than that of John. J. L. Martyn, O. Cullmann, and, best known, R. E. Brown have all written influentially in this area. Moreover, the Gospel of John offers one ground for the appropriateness of its treatment in this way which is not available to the others: the fact that, as a witness to the life and beliefs of its community it does not stand alone but is accompanied by the three Johannine Epistles, two if not all of which are, more plainly than any Gospel, close to the realities of church life. There is then the thought, perhaps surprising to many, that the neglected, brief, almost scrappy letters called II and III John may well deserve high status when it comes to the task of trying to establish the nature of the Johannine church. They might serve as the key unlocking the door of such an investigation, not the appendix attended to when the main work is, supposedly, done.

Judith Lieu has undertaken a study of the Johannine situation from this angle; that is, by way of a thorough and many-sided enquiry into the two letters, both in themselves and in relation to the Johannine corpus as a whole. She has conducted it with extreme academic scrupulosity, in some contrast with the works referred to above, which, for all their strengths, are inclined to paint with bold strokes, pressing hypotheses almost to the limits. What chiefly emerges is first the necessity of caution in making almost any firm judgment about the precise circumstances and history of the Johannine community; then, second, the suggestion that the explanation of the clear differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles lies not so much in their respective places in the Johannine story but in their difference of focus. From one point of view after another, in all the tensions in its teaching and the variety of its concerns, the Gospel finds its resolution and its centre, time and time again, in christology. The figure of Jesus is its chief interest, its key point of reference. For the Epistles, however, attention centres on the community itself, the criteria for membership, the ins and the outs, who is more acceptable than whom. Even when, as in the First Epistle particularly, these matters are expressed in sublime language (and certainly in established Johannine

vocabulary), they have in effect taken over. Theologically, the secondary has come to dominate the primary. In the Second and Third Epistles, with their overt interest in hospitality and power, this is plainly so.

It may be said that it is absurd to imply that there is something regrettable, even reprehensible, here. Everyone operates at different levels of seriousness and has to deal with a range of issues, not all of them momentous. The objection is, however, scarcely to the point. The interest lies in observing the different phases (or aspects – for the temporal succession of Epistles to Gospel, however probable, cannot be proved) of this early Christian community's expression of itself "with pen and ink", and in noting the difficulty of maintaining a certain doctrinal purity or clarity as institutional pressures supervene. The carefulness and freedom from both dogmatism and fancy of Judith Lieu's book make its perceptive analysis and conclusions all the more impressive.

Leslie Houlden

## Connections: The Integration of Theology and Faith

J. L. Houlden, SCM 1986. Pp. viii + 200. £5.95

Those who have cut their theological teeth on modern biblical criticism will be thankful for this book. Amongst the increasingly disparate elements on the agenda of modern theological education it is the historical-critical study of the New Testament which has been predominant in the "disintegration of theology" and the "alienation of theology from religion". It is, therefore, precisely here that Leslie Houlden begins to put things back together. Diversity of expression is, as it were, canonised on the pages of the New Testament and can be embraced by contemporary Christians without fear.

The book falls into two parts. Part One consists, first of all, of an account of the present crisis. Houlden shows here how the separate subjects within theology have developed increasingly high levels of sophistication at the expense of a coherent and unified whole. The present state of affairs is, of course, the result of developments which have taken place since the era of the Enlightenment. The impact of historical consciousness has been accelerated by a growth in the bearing of secular academic disciplines upon the entire theological enterprise. These, linked with the decline of a centrally acknowledged intellectual and religious authority, have had a shattering effect upon the subject. The supposed continuity frequently paraded by religious institutions and formulae is merely a mask for a deeper discontinuity. Sensitivity to anachronism has, furthermore, checked the tendency to merge the past together into a happy whole. The development of the critical mind has in many cases enabled us to "see behind the scenes" in relation to the emergence of doctrines and beliefs and there has been a resulting "loss of innocence" which creates a disparity between theological study and religious commitment.

Following Schillebeeckx, Houlden proceeds to suggest that we are concerned with two main poles in hermeneutics. Rejecting a thorough-going relativism he

maintains that we must first of all “listen” to the writings of the New Testament thoroughly rooted as they are in their first-century milieu, and to the intentions of their authors, before we can allow them to speak authentically to our own time.

From his reading of the New Testament Houlden gleans “four key stages”, which can also be seen to be in operation in subsequent Christian life down the ages. These four are: the impact of Jesus; experience of him; expression and formulation. The root concept here, *à la* Schleiermacher, is experience, and the mood in expression is one of “provisionality”, “tentativeness” and “suggestion”. The process of integration which is the book’s main concern will be essentially individual, personal and subjective. The author warns that the central impact of Jesus is “unlikely to yield ordered and propositional belief of a traditional kind.”

In Part Two, Houlden examines a number of specific issues in relation to both the problems and the principles which he has outlined in the earlier part of the book. So, in relation to tradition, christology, the Resurrection and making ethical decisions the method is carried out using its New Testament base. By contrast with a good deal of traditional thinking, which can now slip away, exercises in these fields will be much more relaxed and varied. The final chapter of the book is in many ways central. It consists of an exegetical exposure of a poem by William Plomer: *A Church in Bavaria*. The poem clinches the style of hermeneutics which has been in play throughout the book: “Everything bends to re-enact the poem lived.” Bending as it does on the page, the poem symbolizes the way in which religious discourse and formulation weaves in and out down the ages bearing witness to the “sunrise of love, enlarged.”

*Connections* is a stimulating book with many constructive and illuminating insights, but not everyone will find Houlden’s reading of the situation satisfactory. The main problems lie in areas which are not explicitly discussed and with assumptions which need addressing in detail. Three areas are worthy of mention: epistemology, method and hermeneutics. Although sometimes lacking the degree of critical awareness exhibited in the present book, developments in philosophy and systematic theology indicate strongly that Enlightenment epistemology cannot simply pass unchallenged. There is in some quarters a call for a critique of critical reason. Is it, after all, possible to achieve the degree of detached observance in relation to history and texts which Houlden suggests? Also, in relation to method, more justification needs to be given for beginning with the New Testament and clear criteria need to be established for assessing whether apparent unity and continuity in fact mask deeper diversity and change, as Houlden maintains, or *vice versa*. It is interesting that throughout the book there is the sense that a more rigorous historical-critical method has given way to a hermeneutics in which poetic discourse plays a crucial role. The tension here between past and present, however, needs more focus. Whatever one might conclude concerning these issues one thing is abundantly clear. In the broad debate concerning matters like the Enlightenment, relativism, the subject-object dichotomy or the relation between past and present, what is most needed is the clear definition of terms by

those who use them, whoever they may be.

Finally, whichever reading of the situation one follows, one connection hinted at in this book, and which needs developing, should be observed. In the worlds of both Systematic Theology and New Testament Studies, there are moves to understand biblical texts as literature, narrative, metaphor and story, although neither side seems fully to have followed up the implications of its labours in these areas for Christian belief and life. The great value of the present book is that it begins to do precisely this. Furthermore, for practitioners in both worlds the role of the imagination in these areas is crucial and this is a word which Houlden uses more than once. Could it be that once again scholars of the New Testament and scholars of Christian Doctrine have an opportunity for lively and mutually enriching debate? If so, this will be a much needed bonus arising out of what is in any case an extremely valuable contribution to a much neglected area.

Stephen W. Need

### **On The Thirty Nine Articles. A Conversation with Tudor Christianity**

Oliver O’Donovan. Paternoster, 1986. Pp. 160. £5.95

The subtitle of this book (by the Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford) reveals its peculiar genius. The aim is neither to bury the Articles, nor to set them on a pedestal, but to discuss the themes they discuss, and to engage them as a conversation partner. Teaching in Canada before returning to Oxford, Prof. O’Donovan explains, made him realise that the ecumenical endeavour will be better served not by denial of denominational traditions, but only by the “critical appropriation and sharing” of them. Hence this elegant and – for all its disclaimers – erudite little book. Its simple lucidity makes it enjoyable to read, while belying the breadth of its theological scope, in which both the Tudor period and our own are set clearly in the context of the theological and philosophical movements of their respective times. It is both generous in its praise – particularly of Cranmer himself, who is not infrequently compared advantageously with his successors – and stern in its criticisms, for instance of the failure to articulate a proper doctrine of the goodness of creation.

The book follows the outline of the Articles (which are printed, quaintly, in their original spelling in an Appendix), except that those on the sacraments (nos. 25–31) are treated last, in order to set them in the context of the concept of authority (nos. 32–39) and of ministry in particular (nos. 20–24). The central emphasis lies in the discernment of the fundamental importance, for the reformers, of Christology and eschatology. Behind the controversies over eucharist or scripture, they were “striving to achieve a Christocentric idea of history” and to defend “an eschatological conception of the work of Christ”, thus achieving a lasting significance for us “for whom the battle between Kierkegaard and Hegel has shaped, and still shapes, our theological era” (p. 33). From this standpoint, Prof. O’Donovan can applaud Cranmer and his followers for, *inter alia*, a Christology

which resolutely blocks the way to the modern doctrine of divine passibility, which is (he claims) rooted in 19th century romantic idealism, and criticize them for the steps they took towards allowing “any non-Christological title-deeds for the recognition of a church”. I can imagine the second of these finding more ready acceptance than the first. He can distinguish between the doctrine of predestination in Article 17 and that of Calvin and the Westminster Confession: it is not only at this point that the book reminds one, in style as well as content, of certain bits of Barth. In particular, in the longest single chapter, he can expound the English Reformers’ view of scripture in a refreshing light, confronting the modern questions of diversity and unity in the Bible from unfamiliar, and to my mind helpful, angles.

He suggests that the Reformers could have taken, and that we should take, a different approach to the sacraments, while defending Cranmer in his (thoroughly non-Zwinglian) attempt to speak of the eucharist both objectively and subjectively. One of the book’s most provocative suggestions is that we should think of *four* sacraments – baptism, the eucharist, the Lord’s Day and the laying on of hands. Here, and frequently, the reader’s appetite is aroused for fuller treatments of crucial and controversial issues. Prof O’Donovan manages to revive one’s interest in what many have felt is a very dead document, while teasing one into fresh thought in the present context. Perhaps the book’s special merit is that it offers a new sort of answer to what one should *do* with the Articles, and indeed the English Reformation as a whole. They are neither for the mantelpiece, nor for the waste-paper basket. Modern Anglican theology, if it is truly to come of age, could do a lot worse than follow this example of respectful, and at the same time courteously critical, conversation with its predecessors.

N. T. Wright

### **God’s Action in the World. The Bampton Lectures for 1986**

Maurice Wiles. SCM, 1986. Pp. viii + 118. £5.95

It is perhaps a sign of the times that an extended account of God’s action in the world should merit scarcely more than a 100 sides of text, even when it appears under the prestigious title of the Bampton Lectures. Within this modest compass Professor Wiles will not disappoint those readers accustomed to his restrained style, which presupposes very considerable learning embodied in judicious and compact argument purged of every superfluous word. The lectures are published almost exactly as delivered in a form “that must seek to carry conviction both intellectually and religiously” and, moreover, they do not aspire to be a comprehensive review of the issues that arise, but are “designed rather to encourage a particular way of viewing those issues” (vii). Indeed, Professor Wiles’ lectures are more an exercise in “perspectival” rather than “expressivist” or, in more traditional terms, “foundationalist” theological thought.

Professor Wiles starts out with a brief conceptual and moral appraisal of the public discussion that followed the

destruction by fire of part of York Minster three days after the consecration of the present Bishop of Durham: “the form in which this question of God’s action was brought into the public forum on each of these occasions was a source of profound embarrassment to many a reflective Christian” (1). Repudiating the “naivety” that attributes a morally questionable partisanship to God, Wiles recognises in the “notion of God acting in the world” (2) both its necessity and its problematic nature. Consequently, the issues raised are not new but traceable to the remotest Christian origins and experienced in different ways throughout the history of the tradition. A brief historical survey culminates in a review of the immediate post-war discussion of the idea of “God’s act” in the context of “biblical theology” and its clarificatory and critical counterpoise in the analytical philosophy of religion of the 1960s. Wiles concludes that a “shift of paradigm” may be required which would affect not only our understanding of how God acts in the world in the context of historical contingency but also, beyond this, he is unable to rule out the possibility that “what is called for may prove to be some even bigger shift in conceptuality in relation to the underlying notion of divine agency itself” (13). On this basis Wiles examines with deft precision the conceptualisation of God’s action in Creation and providence in relation to the “problem of evil”, “public history”, “personal life”, and then directs his attention to Christ and, finally, God’s action “in us”. The position towards which Wiles is working is summarised as follows:

God’s fundamental act, the intentional fruit of the divine initiative, is the bringing into existence of the world. That is a continuous process, and every part of it is therefore in the broadest sense an expression of divine activity. Differences within that process, leading us to regard some happenings as more properly to be spoken of in such terms than others, are dependent not on differing divine initiatives but on differing degrees of human responsiveness (107-8).

The position put forward by Professor Wiles could, not to put too fine a point on it, be summed up thus: as Deism extended through a passing encounter with process thought, which is then tinged with a residual Christian perspectivism that introduces particular differentiation into the “broad” sense of divine activity. It is thus those who express the divine “intention” rather than those who might claim to have received some “special information or advice” who are the most authentic “players in the improvised drama of the world’s creation” (108). The ultimate sanction for Professor Wiles’ argument lies in the personal conviction that:

God is no dead God. He is the living God, the source of all life and the source of that authentic life which his worshippers seek to realize in grateful awareness of his all-pervasive and sustaining presence (108).

This brand of “conviction theology” makes for certain difficulties in the generation of a critical response; it would be hard to avoid an *ad hominem* approach. The relation between the intentional and constative aspects of

Professor Wiles' argument is so intimate that to disturb it would be to intrude upon what amounts to a personal reflective meditation upon the inner consistency of statements that purport to convey meaning about the notion of "God's action in the World". This reviewer found in Professor Wiles' Bampton Lectures neither the stimulus nor the substance of his other contributions to the "making" and "remaking" of Christian theology and to the history of patristics. In comparison, say, with the late G. W. H. Lampe's 1976 Bampton, *God as Spirit*, the reader is perhaps bound to draw conclusions as to the advisability of Professor Wiles' attempt to convey "conviction" on the basis of immediacy of communication rather than generate conclusions (however negative) through argument which preserved the integrity of both sense and reference. The reader's response to the 1986 Bampton Lectures will therefore depend upon what "performance indicators" are deemed most appropriate under the circumstances.

R. H. Roberts

### **Redeeming Time. Atonement Through Education**

Timothy Gorringer. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986. Pp. xvi + 239. £6.95

To say that the cross is central to the Christian understanding of salvation is a truism. But if the cross is the centre, presumably there is also a circumference and, moreover, an area within that perimeter over which God is active in his grace. How then do the unique, "once for all" event of Jesus Christ and the "all the time" activity of God in history relate to each other? A mighty theme, and worthily wrestled with here.

Gorringer (an Anglican who wrote this book while teaching at a theological seminary in India) bids us re-examine, as one of the metaphors or models to describe atonement, the practice of a divine "education" of humankind at work in history. It was a model employed as long ago as Origen and, in the Enlightenment, by Lessing. Gorringer is well aware that much depends on just how "education" is conceived. Compared with the colourful imagery of "redemption from slavery" or "acquittal" or "victory over the evil powers", a process of inculcating "moral truths" to humankind would be pretty sterile. But Gorringer has in mind the interpersonal activity whereby people are changed and led to new levels of awareness of themselves, their possibilities and responsibilities. His mentor here is Paulo Freire with his "pedagogy of the oppressed". But neither are we then presented with a programme of conscientization or political liberation thinly coated with biblical phraseology. The analogical relation is kept clearly in view. The "divine pedagogy" takes place through the *presence* of the Educator and, as always in such education, central to the process is the establishment of I-Thou relationships with the learners. The term solidarity then assumes central importance. It is at this point that sparks of mutual illumination fly between theological doctrine and the pedagogy of liberation: "A liberating pedagogy cannot be conducted from a safe distance beyond the struggle. In fact it can only be conducted from a position

of complete solidarity with those who are oppressed . . . those who take up 'people's struggle' from a safe distance evoke nothing but cynicism." The incarnation and cross are therefore redemptive as the most concrete way in which God manifests his solidarity with his suffering creation. Here we are back with the great incarnational fathers, Justin and Irenaeus and Athanasius, and no less with Luther, Barth and Bonhoeffer (and Schleiermacher!). Indeed one of the strengths of this book is the way it witnesses to an on-going pedagogy within theology itself, as the great figures of the distant and recent past and present are brought into dialogue not just with each other but with the desperate struggles of humanity today.

In arguing for God's persistence with history, Gorringer has to outface that prominent stream of modern biblical theology which so stresses the eschatological nature of the kingdom of God as the end of history that history itself tends to be evacuated of significance. Important therefore are the central chapters arguing that in both Old and New Testaments "Spirit" is closely related to "kingdom", denoting God's patient, ceaseless striving through historical events to evoke his people's response, and that, far from simply calling for an existential decision about "himself", Jesus gave concrete content to the "kingdom of God" in terms of commitment to justice and righteousness in line with the law and the prophets.

The theme is obviously relevant to inter-faith relationships. But in the light of Barth's and Bonhoeffer's critiques of "religion" Gorringer refuses to allow faith in Christ simply to become another religion competing against the rest, or to lose its own particularity. Rather, christocentric faith asks what the God who reigns by his gracious, liberating powerlessness is doing in and with all people in the totality of their cultural existences – of which "religion" is but a part.

Barth used to say that we should read the Bible in one hand with the newspaper in the other. If so, this would be a good book to have balanced on one's knee. I closed it with a – positive – sense of dissatisfaction. Gorringer concludes with an exposition of the style of church consistent with this theology, and very much along the lines of Bonhoeffer's combination of *disciplina arcana* with servant praxis. I warm to that. But my attention had been so caught by the possibilities of a genuinely "worldly" theology – in Bonhoeffer's christocentric sense – that I was left itching to be taken beyond the church to an account not of history in general, but of our particular history this century, as a story in which the crucified God has involved himself.

Keith W. Clements

### **The Power of Symbols**

F. W. Dillistone. SCM, 1986. Pp. vi + 246. £7.50

This book, written with Canon Dillistone's characteristic lucidity, contains chapters on the nature of symbols; the distinction between literal and symbolic; examples of symbolic forms (both visual and dramatic,

written and spoken); theories of symbolism (as found in anthropology, philosophy and theology); biblical symbolism; symbols and culture; and the life and death of symbols.

Canon Dillistone has a well-deserved reputation in the field of (Christian) symbology. In this book he sets out to vindicate the thesis that “symbolic expression is the way to creative freedom”. The book contains many insights and is the obvious product of much learning (“lightly worn”, as they say). It is, however, problematic in at least two respects. Firstly, the question of the *actual* social and economic mediations of “creative freedom” needs to be accorded a centrality which is not found in this book. An unemployed individual subsisting on supplementary benefit in Toxteth is (“notionally”) free, in Mrs Thatcher’s Britain, to buy shares in British Gas, to take out private health insurance. But of course he or she is unlikely to have the *money* to do this. The exercise of freedom, let alone “creative freedom”, in our society is constrained overwhelmingly by an individual’s purchasing power, and this power in turn is determined by existing social and economic configurations. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that Canon Dillistone tends, like his mentor Tillich, to use the notion of freedom in its “notional” sense. Secondly, every instance of the symbolic mode is legitimated by a theology, even if this theology is a “secular” one of an unlimited semiosis. But this theology – in the context of this book, a Christian theology – is itself legitimated by the symbolic mode in question. So here we have the problem of the hermeneutical circle. To have any hope of resolving this problem we have to deal with the practical issue of how discourses and texts are constructed, how their authoritative readers make them *speak*. Here the matter of canonicity must be broached. On this and related matters Dillistone has very little to say, let alone any guidance to offer. An author cannot be blamed for not writing the kind of book that a churlish reviewer wants him/her to write. But the theologian who has sought to come to grips with the legacy of Saussure and Peirce will him/herself be asking questions which this book cannot even begin to answer. And it may be that an adequate (Christian) symbology demands that an attempt be made to address just such “semiotic” questions.

Kenneth Surin

## **China and the Christian Impact. A Conflict of Cultures**

Jacques Gernet. CUP, 1985. Pp. vi + 310. £12.50

Sooner or later all Christians missionaries, whether at home or overseas, have considered the means by which they could best achieve the conversions which were their goal. Their answers to the problem have varied, influenced by both denomination and theological fashion as well as the nature of the society within which they worked, and the historical record of successes and failures in many different missionary fields. Under the impetus of millennial enthusiasms some have hoped by wide-ranging peripatetic evangelism to maximise numbers of conversions in the shortest possible time. Others have adopted the strategy of building isolated

Christian communities, often out of those either with little to hope for, or altogether cut off, from established societies – criminals, slaves, or refugees. Perhaps rather more common has been the patient work of missionaries within particular communities, hoping by their teaching and example to attract a following and to build up the institutions which would in time permeate the whole. Finally there are those missionaries who have aimed primarily to convert those with power and influence – kings, chiefs, intellectual and religious leaders such as the Hindu brahmin or Muslim ulama – in the expectation that whole societies would eventually follow suit. This was the principal method of the Jesuit missionaries, Matteo Ricci and his 17th century successors, in China.

Jacques Gernet’s stimulating book in effect provides a picture of the failure and collapse of this strategy during the period between Ricci’s arrival in 1583 and the 1660s. This is not, however, a conventional narrative account of Roman Catholic missionary activities. Gernet has examined the story chiefly from the Chinese side, studying the growth of anti-Christian literature in China, and analysing the arguments marshalled against Jesuit teaching and apologetics by the Chinese scholars among the literate elite whom they hoped to win over to Christianity.

Confronted with a technically advanced and highly-developed literate culture in a strongly hierarchical society still almost entirely isolated from the West, the Jesuits had few alternative modes of operation from which to choose, even had their own training and religious organization not predisposed them to focus their attention on the emperor, his court, and the scholarly class. In order to win the intellectual debate, a cautious, oblique approach to the transmission of the Christian message was adopted. This also reflected both Ricci’s sense of the Jesuits’ vulnerability, and his assumption that indigenous Confucianism showed traces of either “a ‘natural religion’ or . . . an ancient transmission of the message of the Bible to the Chinese” (p. 193). As a result, the search for analogies was vital to Ricci. He proceeded from an equation of the Chinese heaven and Sovereign on High with the Biblical paradise and God as Creator, and drew parallels between Christian and Chinese moralities.

It slowly became apparent that this was an approach to the missionary task which created serious difficulties. Gernet shows how initially Chinese enthusiasm arose from both a long tradition of syncretism and assimilation where other systems of belief were concerned, and the immediate conditions of Chinese society. In Jesuit hands Christian ethical teaching seemed to provide a much-needed reinforcement of traditional morality, “and so, in a particularly rigorous reactionary period, they were made welcome” (p. 142). For a time Ricci’s caution hid from the Chinese the essentially dogmatic and exclusive nature of Christian beliefs, but gradually this accommodation broke down. After Ricci’s death in 1610, not only did some missionaries voice reservations but, as their understanding of the “Barbarians” (westerners) grew, the Chinese themselves began to question the analogies. Increasingly the Chinese came to realise that the Jesuits did not relish debate and reciprocity – “What they detest above all is that people

should think” wrote Xu Dashou in the 1630s (p. 82). Instead they were interested in imposing a set of beliefs which ran counter to the fundamentals of Chinese thought and social organization. In the political sphere, for example, once it was realised that God was above the emperor and that all men were equal in his sight, Christianity began to be condemned as profoundly subversive. Understanding brought Chinese accusations that missionaries were spies, their teaching a prolonged and subtle exercise in deception, and that Christianity itself was to be compared with indigenous religious deviancy.

Gernet examines the developing conflicts over creation and its dating, the status of saints, views on women, and the Incarnation. He argues that examples of Chinese sympathy for aspects of Christian belief or ritual reflected no indigenous change of *mentalité* but a conviction that they reinforced Chinese thinking and custom. Two distinct civilizations and sets of mental categories were in conflict, to a degree the profundity of which slowly became apparent to both sides, and in a manner which many Chinese found deeply offensive.

For practical reasons Jesuits were still favoured at the imperial court in the late 17th century. However, it would be unwise to see in the subsequent controversy over the “Chinese rites” no more than a heavy-handed Catholic authority finally combining with jealous political rivals in the 1740s to abort a sensitive and successful missionary endeavour. The implication of Gernet’s book is that the papal pronouncements against adaptation to Asian practices were no more than a symbolic *coup de grace* for a missionary strategy which had already foundered on the rocks of incompatibility and Chinese self-confidence. Gernet is at his best when discussing the Chinese texts and the philosophical conflicts involved in this confrontation between Chinese and Christian beliefs. The thread of historical development and the sense of context is far less easy to grasp. Nevertheless this is an absorbing book from which not only those with a professional interest in China but theologians, students of missions and comparative religion, and historians of western expansion will all derive pleasure and profit.

Andrew Porter

## Letters on the Sūfī Path

Ibn ‘Abbād of Ronda. Translation and introduction by John Renard, S. J. Preface by Annemarie B. Schimmel. Paulist Press, 1986. Pp. xviii + 238. \$9.95

This selection of letters has as its subject Islam’s main mystical tradition, Sufism. The author, Ibn ‘Abbād (1332-90), was born at Ronda in Spain, but spent his adult life in Morocco. Annemarie Schimmel says of his works in her preface: “There is no poem, and one looks in vain for ecstatic utterances, for descriptions of the different states and stations of the Sufis, for ravishing hymns about the Beloved whose eternal beauty is overwhelming and for whom one wants to suffer and die [ . . . ]. We rather find in Ibn ‘Abbad a quiet friend in whom we can trust, a man who does not dazzle us with flashes of glorious ideas [ . . . ].”

After reading such words in a preface, one naturally suspects that the author is a bore. Indeed he is: a repetitious moralist entirely devoid of inspiration, a man so fanatical in his unoriginality as to view any new idea as the work of the Devil, and a preacher so monotonous in his exhortations to virtue as to drive anyone to vice. At the beginning of the 20th century a western Islamicist could have said so without hesitation; nowadays he would be deterred by the dead weight of eirenic diplomacy that has dominated the field for the last 70 years. It is typical of contemporary Christian students of Islam, and their preoccupation with “dialogue”, that they should devote their efforts to texts of this kind. Given the vast riches of Islamic literature, one feels that a translator of such admirable competence might have found some more worthy materials.

There are a few points of interest in Ibn ‘Abbād’s letters, in spite of his personality. We hear of the faults that afflict the teacher: he may ‘err by seating himself in a place elevated above his companions without sufficiently cogent reason; [ . . . ] or by favouring the wealthy and the children of this world with places nearest him, to the exclusion of the poor and indigent.” Ibn ‘Abbād thinks that the pilgrimage to Mecca is more likely to be acceptable “if one is from the more educated classes”. He gives advice on what to do when, in the course of reading a book, one encounters disagreement between Muslim thinkers: “When one who is studying this book comes across one of these sections he should simply move on to another, and give the author the benefit of the doubt about what the seeker knows not [ . . . ]. The seeker will thus combine the advantages of reading the book with a deferential attitude toward the religious scholars who understand these things”.

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that if this man has commanded great respect and had much influence in Morocco, then this unadventurous frame of mind is not unconnected with that country’s failure to achieve progress in other fields. It would be entirely wrong, however, to imagine that the whole of Islam was like this: whereas in the Muslim West, from the 14th century onwards, philosophical and theological speculation is at an end, in Iran it has continued to flourish up to our own time. Moreover, Islam in Morocco is a fascinating subject for the anthropologist, with its rich profusion of archaic customs and uninhibited dubious practices. It seems to be only “the more educated classes” who have been tame and pedestrian.

What is most worthy of remark in the letters is the extent of worry and psychological disorientation in Ibn ‘Abbād’s chief correspondent. Given the limitations of his spiritual director, this is hardly surprising. The pupil complains that he is not notably moved when chanting the Qur’ān, and would very much like to cry but cannot. He is plagued incessantly by scruples. He spends his time “reading a very broad selection of books, but without a single focus or principle of discrimination.” He is beset with perplexity regarding his work (teaching children). This, he fears, will make him lose eternal salvation. Moreover, he is “hesitant and doubtful about the propriety of the sources of stipends”. His doubts lead him to feel that he should leave his family.

The translator uses the word “jurists” to render the Arabic phrase *ahl al-zāhir* (literally, “people of the exterior”). This is misleading, since it has often been common for a Muslim to be both a jurist (*faqih*, in effect a rabbi), and a Sufi mystic with a concern for inner meanings as well. Thus the mistranslation, which presents Ibn ‘Abbād as hostile to jurists in general, perpetuates the common misconception that Islam has always been divided into opposing camps: lawyers on the one hand, esotericists on the other.

It is odd that a volume which contains few new materials should begin with a bizarre statement by Professor Schimmel: “Mystical concerts and whirling dance are basically meant to provide the Sufi with some relaxation after his unceasing, hard spiritual exercises”. Whatever more convincing explanations may be offered for such activities, this, to be sure, is a remark of unexpected novelty.

Julian Baldick

### **A Companion to the Alternative Service Book**

R. C. D. Jasper & Paul F. Bradshaw. SPCK, 1986. Pp. 500. £19.95

This book is unquestionably an essential tool for anyone engaged in the study of liturgy within the Church of England. On the whole it is most competently presented, the writing is clear and straightforward, and the historical background of the Alternative Service Book is lucidly and concisely set out.

The greater part of this companion volume to the ASB consists of first a history and second a commentary on each of the services it contains. This at first sight attractive and rational structure in fact suffers from a certain amount of unnecessary duplication; for instance, on the development of the use of the Kyries, Eucharist section A History (p. 155) has a brief and accurate outline of its origins – but in Eucharist section B Rite A Commentary (p. 190) a more detailed account appears, and there is no cross-referencing. Can it be that Bradshaw in the States wrote the history sections while Jasper in the UK dealt independently with the commentaries? Certainly their material should have been assembled more carefully. A further disadvantage of the book’s structure is apparent in the fact that the history sections describe, of intention, the history of the particular service as it now appears in the ASB. The unintended consequence of this is that Morning and Evening Prayer of the ASB are presented as the culmination of the whole thrust of the development of the Daily Office in the Western Church: one feels for the sake of balance and proportion at least some cognisance should have been taken of the alternative development which produced the Liturgy of the Hours of the current Roman use.

Particularly where some of the liturgical quirks of ASB are concerned, a note of self-justification, perhaps inevitably, creeps in. Consider, for example, their treatment of the rubric of section 36 of the Eucharist Rite

A: “The president takes the bread and the cup into his hands and replaces them on the holy table”. The headings to Rite A make it clear that Dix’s Four-Action Shape is understood here in its developed form – elements taken *in order* to be blessed, bread broken *in order* to be given. The identification of the first of these actions with the Offertory/ Presentation of the gifts has rightly been abandoned; offertory processions of solemn presentation of gifts carry their own justification, for which incorporation into the Four-Action Shape is unnecessary. Therefore the Taking in order to Bless must be an accompaniment of the Eucharistic Prayer which accomplishes that blessing, and traditional Western practice ties this action to the Institution Narrative. Jasper and Bradshaw however present us with the novel concept in this section 36 of Taking, not in order to Bless, but in order to Put Down Again, and attempt to justify this by telling us that this indicates that “these are the elements over which thanks are to be given”. We would never have guessed. Moreover, their appeal to Jewish table custom is not convincing.

Consider also what one finds when seeking a rationale for ASB’s retention of the extremely weak epiclesis of Eucharistic Prayers IV of Rite A and I of Rite B. The commentary section on the Epiclesis on p. 213 seems to indicate that the authors would justify it by reference to the epiclesis of the Eucharistic Prayer of the Apostolic Tradition, since they describe it as “essentially a prayer for a good communion”, despite its wording “send your Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church”. But contrast this with the history section of p. 152 concerning the epiclesis, which explicitly states that Hippolytus’s Eucharistic Prayer contains “a petition for the descent of the Spirit . . . on the oblation of the Church *and* for the fruits of communion”.

There is one quite unforgivable error on p. 199 in the section on the Nicene Creed where, with regard to the inclusion of the *filioque*, the astonishing assertion is made that “the problem of the phrase is not its truth but its authority”. Compare this with the statement by Bishop Kallistos Ware in his book *The Orthodox Church*, p. 59: “Orthodox believe the *filioque* to be theologically untrue.” Can both Jasper and Bradshaw really be unaware of this? Other minor criticisms could be made; the deliberate refusal to discuss the question of liturgical language at all, which for many is the way in which the impact of ASB has been felt most immediately, is to be regretted. But there are good things too: the extensive bibliographies are extremely helpful, even though here too there are perhaps inevitable omissions, such as the recent works of, for instance Taft on the Liturgy of the Hours and Talley on the Liturgical year.

Nonetheless, this book is to be recommended. In these days of flexible liturgy, it is essential for those responsible for leading the Church’s worship to know what they are doing and why; what choices they should make among the great resources which ASB provides, and how to make best use of its material. For this purpose, Jasper and Bradshaw’s Companion is invaluable: its commentaries should however be regarded with a critical eye.

Jill Pinnock

## So Near and Yet So Far. Rome, Canterbury and ARCIC

Hugh Montefiore. SCM, 1986. Pp. 154. £5.95

The ARCIC texts have had a mixed reception in both Communion, and the present reviewer (an Anglican, and an enthusiastic follower of the ARCIC route) admits the need for the kind of cautious airing of anxieties, shared by many Anglicans, which Bishop Montefiore offers in this book. It is not, however, a commentary on the ARCIC texts, but rather a bishop's eye view of the present relations between the Churches; moreover, this episcopal perspective, though rich in perceptive detail, nonetheless fails to engage in serious reflection upon the reasons for seeking unity between Rome and Canterbury at all.

It is true that the title of the opening chapter affirms what none would deny – the “Miracle of Convergence”; and in it, the Bishop describes well the remarkable rapprochement of the two Churches within the last 30 years. At the same time, however, this chapter reveals the shallow ecclesiological soil in which the book is rooted; for there is no attempt to say what Anglicanism *is* – or Roman Catholicism either. Thus we are told that the growth of parish councils, *inter alia*, in the Roman Church is a sign of that Church becoming more “Anglican”; and, conversely, that what the Bishop calls the “formal recognition of the episcopal college” in Anglican synodical government is a sign of that Church becoming more “Catholic”. But the “miracle” here seems to be no more than a convergence of secondary things, almost of superficialities; and though the Bishop declares that the two Churches have more in common than what divides them, this common ground is summarized in no more than seven lines (on p. 2).

The result, inevitably, is that the “So Far” of the book's title looms much larger than the “So Near”; and the bulk of the book is devoted to exploring, and emphasizing, the outstanding differences. There is no doubt that upon many specific matters, the Bishop is illuminating and persuasive: especially, and predictably, in the chapters on “Traditions of Ethical Thinking” and “The Church and Sexual Ethics”. These chapters, perhaps the most valuable of the book, not only illustrate the problem of differing pastoral styles likely to arise from a closer union of the two churches; but form an important contribution to the kind of discussion which will be the only means of resolving such difficulties.

It is when the Bishop leaves the pastoral for the more directly ecclesial that his handling of the issues is less happy; and the reason is that he fails to dig deep enough into ecclesiology – that is, into *history* – to uncover the precise nature of the division between Rome and Canterbury, and therefore the theological impulse in this piece of ecumenical adventure. It is not enough to begin with two Christian communions, floating in the midst of time, and showing signs of approximation to each other; and then to weigh up the advantages or otherwise of a merger. It is not even enough to take note of four centuries of separation, and the bitter wounds they have inflicted on both sides. A thorough ecclesiological dig must get us right down to the roots of *Ecclesia Anglicana*,

the millennium in which Canterbury and Rome were united. No sense can be made of the Reformation unless we grasp the Reformers' own conviction that they were but cleansing what was already there; the particular manner in which they picked and chose which continuities with the past to preserve and which to discard; and the way in which Anglicanism still bears the marks of its papal past. Anglican self-understanding depends upon a claim to continuity with the untorn fabric of Latin Christendom; and therefore Anglican ecclesiology has the question of the Roman See still lying unresolved at its very heart.

It is true that here and there, Bishop Montefiore remembers that Rome and Canterbury were once united; but it seems to play no real part in his thinking. Thus there is no sense of urgency, or of ecumenical imperative, in his book, for there is no sense of *schism*, no shame and horror at the tearing of the fabric.

Yet are we not often told that this is the ARCIC method – to leave on one side the bloodstained polemics of the past, and to find a fresh and eirenic vocabulary to unite us for the future? Yes, indeed; but new words can still only describe and define what we *are*, and what we are is what the past has made us. Certainly no ARCIC text suggests that the past should simply be discarded. Rome and England's pasts are united – and divided – in a particularly painful, intimate and unforgettable way. When Roman Catholics and Anglicans can try to do their history together, and sensitively tell one story of their past, then the broken limbs of Latin Christendom will at last be healing, and so many of the matters discussed in this book will begin to fall into place.

P. G. Atkinson

## The Future of Christian Ethics

Ronald H. Preston. SCM, 1987. Pp. vi + 280. £12.50

Professor Preston has collected in this volume many of the essays which he wrote between 1980–1986. It is thus a sequel to the last volume of collected essays, *Explorations in Theology Volume 9*, which came out in 1981, and covered the years 1970–1980. The current volume is therefore less of a piece than his Scott Holland lectures which appeared in 1983 as *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*.

Professor Preston has grouped these essays around three themes, which are those of ecumenism, economics and politics. He has always been keenly aware of the WCC and three of the articles in *Explorations* were on the World Council. So he includes a paper on English Anglican Social Ethics which he gave at an Anglican/German Lutheran consultation; looks at the future of Protestant ethics, which builds on an unpublished paper given to Scandinavian Lutherans in Denmark; examines the 1979 WCC conference on science and faith, with particular attention being given to the environment which was a theme of the 1982 Vancouver Assembly of the WCC; and finally offers another review of the significance of William Temple. Again there was an earlier review in *Explorations* of Temple's place in Anglican social ethics.

When we pass to the area of economics, the continuity with *Explorations* is also evident. There he included two articles on “the right to work” and on transnational corporations. Now the target has shifted to the new right. This movement occupied only a few pages in Preston’s 1977 Maurice Lectures published in 1979 as *Religion and the Persistence of Capitalism*, but had a whole chapter in the Holland Lectures. However the two articles in his latest collection are valuable because they examine the New Right in British political life, and especially the divisions within the Conservative party on economics between the old patriarchal thinkers and the new economic liberals or advocates of the free-market. Brian Griffiths in particular is examined in detail. A different style is adopted in a chapter on the rise in unemployment, entitled “The End of the Protestant Work Ethic?”, where he advocates paying a social wage to every adult citizen.

The third area concerns the political order. It is the most wide-ranging, and it is not easy to find a common theme even as general as “the political order”. Professor Preston has long been a critic of Liberation Theology. Most of the references in *Explorations* are critical, and in the Holland Lectures (p. 92) he says “In detail I do not think liberation theology can be of much help to us”. The critical tone is maintained in this volume as well. However he does distinguish between political theology and liberation theology. Political theology he defines by the writings of the German theologians J. B. Metz and D. Solle, one Roman Catholic, one Lutheran. The value of political theology is the light it throws on the role of the Church as a structure of power, and on the need for all theology to be aware of its sociological conditioning. Liberation theology is too uncritical of Marxism which it takes to be a science, and is over-conservative in its biblical exegesis. Above all it does not translate from South America to Western Europe, where the poor are a minority and alienated from the churches. Equally Professor Preston is critical of the theology of hope, while accepting that it can be a useful reminder of the need for Christian openness. Much of his criticism is drawn from insights which he has taken from the new right: “the politics of imperfection” stresses human ignorance, irrationality, and conflicts of interest. In general he finds the politics of hope unrealistic, even if he ultimately will not accept conservatism.

Finally there are a number of articles which stand on their own. A chapter on penal theory examines the biblical view of punishment and its place in Christian tradition. He then relates penal theory to theories of the state, and the contribution which the Christian faith can make. Another article examines Bryan Wilson’s theory of the decline of religious belief in modern society. A final chapter examines the relationship of the academic theologian to the church which he belongs to, discussing the need to relate to other disciplines and the ability of local parishes to reflect theologically.

My feelings as I finished this volume were that Professor Preston’s defence of his own position was as sharp as ever, but the tone has shifted more to criticism and consolidation. Certainly the new right and liberation theology need the acute and sometimes astringent treatment which they are given. Perhaps however the

reviews of past Anglican work could have been shortened or omitted, and a greater emphasis paid to the WCC and environmental ethics. Here he is at his best, and the book would have been far more concise if the attacks on the far right and far left had been balanced by an exploration of substantive issues such as penal theory and environmentalism. Is it too much to ask for a further volume which could encompass our world after Chernobyl and the enterprise culture which our politicians have presented us with?

Peter Sedgwick

## Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Times

Richard Harris (ed.). Mowbray. Pp. x + 205. £6.95

In the realm of public affairs Reinhold Niebuhr has been the most influential theologian of our century. A generation of distinguished American politicians, including Adlai Stevenson, Arthur Schlesinger and Hubert Humphrey, acknowledged him not only as a prime influence on their own lives, but on the whole American approach to politics. “Niebuhr is the father of us all,” said George Kennan. Dennis Healey and Tony Benn are just two of the many British men of affairs who gladly acknowledge his influence on their thought. As the late Richard Crossman said “*Moral Man and Immoral Society*” was one of the books which changed my life. It was the most exciting shock intellectually that I had as a young man and I’m still recovering from it”. In his book of essays, which is an attempt to bring Niebuhrian thought back into the mainstream of contemporary debate, a distinguished range of academic writers discuss the issues of our time, both intellectual and practical. They cover war and peace, revolution, nuclear weapons, intervention and monetarism and ask what light Niebuhr shed on them; they are not primarily concerned with what Niebuhr said in his own historical context. This is not the place for the eager student to enquire within about the “essential” Niebuhr – his life and thought – although it does highlight the urgent need for such a publication.

Some of the essayists have interpreted their brief with a large degree of freedom. Daphne Hampson writing a critique of Reinhold Niebuhr on sin and Keith Ward on Niebuhr and the Christian Hope pay little more than lip service to Niebuhr and his thought before striking out on a path unaccompanied by much reference to the man who has supposedly inspired their contributions. Having told us that her criticism of Niebuhr is that he equates male with human, Daphne Hampson in a brilliantly stimulating essay maps out the reasons why for many people, not all of them feminists, talk of God in terms of power, isolation and hierarchy – essentially male conceptions – has led to God becoming stranded high and dry, or at best being rendered irrelevant. By indicating what she sees as fatal flaws in Niebuhr’s conception of God and sin – sin as pride, God as male – Hampson presents in detail her own stark and persuasive analysis of what is wrong with a male dominated theology and a male God.

Keith Ward departs even further from Niebuhr's supposed inspiration and presents his own by now familiar approach to a Christian eschatology. This "requires us to measure our political acts by standards and norms higher than those of expediency and practicality; but none-the-less to seek to realise those standards as far as possible within the conditions and constraints of our own time". For those who are already familiar with Ward's writings they will find here a usefully concise summary but little that is new, and even less on Niebuhr.

The other essayists are more successful in striking a balance between a presentation of Niebuhr's views on a particular subject and the light this sheds on a contemporary issue. James Childress discussing Niebuhr's realistic-pragmatic approach to war and the nuclear dilemma gets closest to the heart of Niebuhr's thought in quoting from *Love and Justice*:

"It is not possible to defeat a foe without causing innocent people to suffer with the guilty . . . It is not possible to move in history without becoming tainted with guilt. Once bombing has been developed as an instrument of warfare, it is not possible to *disavow* its use without capitulating to the foe who refuses to *disavow* it."

It is significant that in discussing the dilemma that nuclear weapons present to the realistic-pragmatic christian (of whom Niebuhr is an example *par excellence*) Childress has to resort to references from a wide range of Niebuhr's works, as if this issue revealed the full scope of his thinking. It also brings out most clearly another key aspect of Niebuhr's thought: his repeated appeal to the doctrine of justification by faith to overcome the moral paralysis that might otherwise result from an emphasis on moral ambiguity, guilt and tragedy. Too many christians who comment on political matters, nearly all of whom do so from the irresponsible safety of the "opposition" benches, seem to suffer from this moral paralysis. It was Niebuhr's recognition of this anomaly that is so sadly lacking today. At best such people insist that there is no clear christian solution to a particular issue (say the Falklands War or Nuclear Weapons); consequently they prevaricate between an appeal to an impossible ideal and bland generalisations. At worst they assume a tone of righteous indignation over the inevitable "guilt" associated with any "movement in sinful history" and oppose all such action with misguided zeal. These people fail to recognise the extent to which on assumption to a position of power, where one has to be responsible for the execution and outcome of policies previously advocated from the "opposition benches", the holders of power are forced to modify and amend their original manifesto. This invariably involves a compromise with the ideal, greater caution and realistic pragmatism, as well as acceptance of the fact that clearing up a messy situation in the real world involves getting dirty.

It was Niebuhr's genius to recognise and to speak to this dilemma and to forge a theology that made working sense to men and women in positions of power, giving them hope that despite all the compromises, and all the attendant guilt associated with *any* action in the real

world, right action was not impossible for them. It is to the shame of today's church that no one seems to have taken up Niebuhr's torch. In bringing a Niebuhrian light to bear on the issues of our time this book of essays is a timely warning of the predicament facing men and women of goodwill in positions of power, and it points a way forward. It will serve as a useful source book of current christian thinking in fields ethical, political, cultural and doctrinal. Most important of all it will drive us back to its inspirational source – the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

Shabbir Akhtar *Reason and the Radical Crisis of Faith*. Peter Lang. Pp. 281

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D. Catherine Brown *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson*. CUP. Pp. x + 358. £35.00 (hb)

David Deeks *Pastoral Theology. An Inquiry*. Epworth. Pp. 279. £9.50

Linda-Marie Delloff et al. *A Century of the Century*. Eerdmans/Paternoster. Pp. xi + 116

Susan Dowell and Linda Hurcombe *Dispossessed Daughters of Eve. Faith and Feminism* (new edition). SPCK. Pp. xxv + 148. £7.50

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Rowan Williams. *Arius. Heresy and Tradition*. DLT. Pp. xi + 348. £19.95 (hb)