

Book Reviews

L'Esprit De L'Homme. Etude sur l'anthropologie religieuse d'Origène : by Jacques Dupuis. (Bruges, Desclee de Brouwer, 1968). Pp. 208. Price 165 Fr. (broché) or 201 Fr. (relié).

This doctoral thesis on the anthropology of Origen has a quite exceptional interest, especially from the point of view of an Indian theology. Origen was the person who was above all responsible for the development of a Christian theology in terms of Greek thought. He has often been accused of corrupting the Gospel by turning it into a system of Platonic philosophy; more recently the whole system of Greek and Latin theology, which derives from him, has come under attack, and the demand has been made for the 'dehellenization' of Christianity. But Father Dupuis, following de Lubac, Danielou and von Balthasar, shows how profoundly orthodox and firmly based on Scripture were the main lines of Origen's thought. Just as with his great disciple, St. Gregory of Nyssa, it is an essentially Biblical and Christian view of life, which is articulated in terms of Greek philosophy.

This comes out clearly in the contrast between the 'flesh' and the 'spirit', which is one of the main themes of his asceticism. It has often been maintained that Origen and the Greek Fathers after him introduced a false dichotomy of body and soul, which led to a contempt for the body and all its works, from which the Church today is only emancipating itself with difficulty. But, in fact, Origen, as Father Dupuis shows, made a perfectly clear distinction between the 'body' and the 'flesh'. The 'body' is for him an essential constituent of human nature, whose ultimate destiny is to be transfigured by the 'spirit' so as to become a 'spiritual body'. The 'flesh', on the other hand, following St. Paul and St. John, he sees as the body fallen under the dominion of sin and become the enemy of the 'spirit'. His terminology was not always consistent (any more than that of the New Testament) but the distinction is clear.

But the fundamental character of the anthropology of Origen, which gives it its great value, is the division which he makes (following again St. Paul) into body, soul and spirit. After his time the division into body and soul alone became the norm of Christian philosophy and theology, and one cannot but remark what a great impoverishment this was! The 'body-soul' psychology tends to cut man off from the source of his being in God and leads easily to an anthropocentric view of life. But the concept of 'spirit' as distinct both from soul and body immediately places

man in direct relation to God and reveals his supernatural character (what Karl Rahner calls the 'supernatural existential'). For the 'spirit' in Origen's thought is the precise point of human transcendence; it is the point at which the created 'spirit' in man touches the uncreated 'spirit' of God. It is, in fact, nothing else but man's created participation in the uncreated Spirit of God.

This conception is, as we have said, of extraordinary importance for an Indian Christian theology. The fundamental concept in Hindu philosophy for the understanding of man is that of the Self, or *Ātman*. If we use the ordinary Christian terminology of 'soul' and 'body', there is nothing which really corresponds with this concept. For the Hindu, the individual 'soul', the *jīva*, is something essentially transitory, which is common moreover to plant and animal. What constitutes the real and eternal Being of man, his true Self, is the *Ātman*, which corresponds almost exactly with what we mean by 'spirit'. The difficulty, however, is that for the Hindu, at least for the *advaitin*, the *Ātman* tends to be identified with the Brahman, that is with the supreme Being. Even when, as in the philosophy of Ramanuja, distinction is made between the 'soul' or 'spirit' and God, the *Ātman* is seen as a 'part' or a 'mode' of the divine being. It is here surely that Origen's conception of the 'spirit' in man, as a 'participation' in the Spirit of God, is of crucial importance. It is at this point that a real dialogue can take place between Hindu and Christian thoughts, the idea of 'participation' in the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4) providing just that concept which the Vedanta needs to clarify its conception of the relation between man and God.

Thus the thought of Origen can provide at once a model of the kind of interpretation of the Gospel in terms of another philosophy, which is required for the development of an Indian theology, and at the same time a starting-point from which an Indian Christian anthropology could be developed. We owe a debt of thanks to Father Dupuis for this study in depth of the thought of Origen, which with its meticulous scholarship is not only a re-creation of a theology of the past, but a pointer towards a theology of the future.

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The Contemporary Debate on God : by P. David. C.L.S., Madras, 1969. Pp. 251. Price Rs.2.

The death of God debate is blowing over. In the West, the discussion seems to have made its point and subsided. Of course, we in India have yet to catch up with the full force of it. And we need literature that helps us to understand this American-West-European debate from our own perspective.

Such help is what Dr. David, Principal of the Gurukul Theological College and Research Institute in Madras, tries to give us

in this book. He wrote it while on a Sabbatical year at the University of Chicago and had the help of good scholars like Joseph Sittler in his work.

It is a book written from the heart, as the author himself says. He writes with a passion to make Christians see that the true God is the God who is inseparable 'from the organic context of life and fellowship of mankind'. He calls his approach the prophetic interpretation of God.

On the death of God debate itself Dr. David has no new information to give us; nor does he give us a fresh interpretation of it. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that, even with the help of a great literary connoisseur like Sittler, Dr. David has not attempted to give the literary background of the Death of God movement—Nietzsche and Lawrence, Blake and Sartre. He deals with the Christian stalwarts like Bultmann, Schubert Ogden, Paul van Buren and Bishop Robinson.

The book seems to have been written before the Death of God debate actually broke out. Gabriel Vahanian, Thomas Altizer and William Hamilton are not treated except through an occasional speech of theirs. The author probably did not have the benefit of that interesting anthology edited by William Miller on *The New Christianity* (Delta, New York, 1967). We don't know what books he used since there is no bibliography given in Dr. David's book. As an interpretation of the Western Death of God debate the book is far from exciting.

There are some interesting remarks in the book concerning the Indian religions, though not much fresh material. The secularizing influence of Indian Muslim leaders like Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Mohammed Iqbal is treated with sympathy.

The conclusion of the book is in Chapter 9—*The Prophetic Interpretation of God: the reality given*, where the author claims to serve his meat course. The main conclusion is: 'It is practical to accept the reality of God's activity in and with the given.' The experience of God is then confirmed by the history of religious experience, by psychic phenomena and by social-historical experience.

Dr. David has put down a lot of interesting materials that he has gathered from books of Western Christian theology and Indian religious scripture, with great clarity and wisdom in selection.

He cites the Roman Catholic understanding of the Church as the continuation of the life and work of Jesus, as belonging to the prophetic tradition, though he accuses the Roman Catholic Church of having eliminated individual freedom and the right to question and discuss (p. 226).

He cites Tillich and Thielicke, Teilhard and Toynbee, Tagore and Tom Altizer, but it is often difficult to get the drift of all these citations in relation to the main theme—the Death of God debate.

We can certainly respond from the heart to his concluding passionate 'Appeal to World Bodies, Secular and Religious', to build a world of peace, based on Dr. David's prophetic interpretation of God.

God is not dead so long as people like Dr. David can write so passionately about Him, with deep conviction, but not excessive convincing power. His main point, that it is the dissociation of God-thought from social reality that is at the heart of contemporary secularism, is well taken.

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FR. PAUL VERGHESE

God, Christ and the World: by Arthur Michael Ramsey (Archbishop of Canterbury). S.C.M. Press, London, 1969. Pp. 125. Price 18s.

Here is a book which succeeds well in what it sets out to be—a study in contemporary theology.

Dealing sympathetically with the 'Secular City' Gospellers, the 'God is Dead' enthusiasts and the Bultmannian demythologizers, the perceptive Primate not only draws out what is positive from the writings of such men as Harvey Cox, van Buren, Bultmann and Altizer, but ably shows up their limitations and makes his own capable contribution.

He argues strongly for a Christo-centric theism as a proper, Biblically orientated corrective to the near- (and sometimes neo-) pelagianism of modern 'secularist' theologians. He pleads for a true transcendence which, he says, 'implies otherness and distinction, but not apartness or awayness' from man in his condition and environment. Transcendence, he says, is the message of Christianity to modern man who has 'built the secular city and is restless within it'. True freedom is the result of a God-orientated life as seen supremely in Jesus.

While setting value on the existential approach of Bultmann he rightly insists on the *ontological* element in N.T. Christianity which is bypassed by Bultmann and pleads for going beyond Bultmann and his limitations. He stresses that the N.T. picture is of a 'God who is Christlike and in whom there is no unchrist-likeness at all'; and that the resurrection of Christ was not only an experience for the disciples in which Jesus became contagious to them but that in it something *happened* so as to vindicate for them the meaning of the cross. The cross and resurrection are seen as the very centre of Christian faith and he insists that it is not the cross and resurrection of 'X' but of the historical Jesus whose life and teaching had already begun to make an impact. It is in Jesus that the whole human race finds its own true meaning, not only as the man for others but as the man for God as well.

In an excellent closing chapter the writer makes a powerful plea all round for theological openness—on the one hand to the contemporary world and on the other hand to the *past*—to the death and resurrection of Christ, to the lives of men which contain reflections of what is eternal, and to the final meaning of man as he who is created in God's image for lasting fellowship with God.

The Archbishop has given us a book for which every serious student of theology, bewildered by an ever-increasing output of strange and conflicting ideas, will be grateful. Here is good solid theology, and right up to date. The treatment, if anything, suffers from brevity, compressed into less than 100 pages, though S.C.M. Press manages to stretch it out to 125—perhaps to justify the rather exorbitant price of 18s.

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R. W. BOWIE

Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: by Brian Tierney. C.U.P., 1968. Pp. 280. Price £2.75.

Handbook of Source Material for Students of Church History: by William G. Young. C.L.S., Madras, 1969. Pp. 368. Price Rs.11.50.

Dr. Tierney's analysis of the contribution of the medieval canonists to the Conciliar Movement was first published in 1955 and has been out of print for some time. It had a revolutionary impact on the study of late medieval thought; and one is tempted to surmise that the motive for this new edition is not only to satisfy the demands of scholars, but to make a highly topical contribution to post-Vatican II heart-searchings. It is a rigorously technical study of what might appear at first sight a rather domestic problem in the medieval West, and the author scrupulously avoids trying to point the moral or adorn his tale; yet the thoughtful reader at Bangalore or Serampore, no less than at Poona or Kurseong, can hardly avoid finding a strange relevance about some of the questions which the canonists were asking. What is the precise *locus* of authority in the visible Church? What is the relationship of hierarchy to *laos*? What precisely is the 'Church' anyway? Protestants on the threshold of Union schemes, and Catholics seeking to assimilate the thinking of Vatican II may both find in the fourteenth century some insights which are not altogether irrelevant, and some questions which bear thinking about.

The election of two rival Popes in 1378 plunged the Church in Europe into schism for nearly 40 years. Nearly everybody agreed that a Council was the only way out of the *impasse*; but who was to summon it? On what legal basis could it claim to act in the name of the Church as a whole? By what machinery could it proceed against the supreme head of the Church who was

himself, by definition, the only competent authority to decide on the legality of the procedure? All wished to restore to the Church a focus of unity in its single head, but 'precisely in order to bring about that result they had to assume that the Church could act as an effectively united organism even when it lacked such a head' (p. 240).

The significance of Dr. Tierney's book is that it shows clearly that the Conciliar theory was not (as at one time supposed) derived from contemporary 'democratic' movements, nor yet from the anti-Papal propaganda of the Imperial publicists, but emerged from the heart of the Church's own tradition and canon law. A century or more before the schism was thought of, increasingly articulate theories were developing which stressed the indefectibility of the faith of the Church as a whole (as opposed to any of its constituent parts, which might err), the concept of the 'general good' of the *universitas fidelium* (which the Pope could not infringe), and the right of a Council to depose an heretical or schismatic Pope. Paradoxically, some of the theories which later proved most useful to the Conciliarists had originally been evolved in support of the Papal supremacy. After 1378, not for the first time in Church History, theories were stood on their heads. The most fruitful of all the canonists' work was their exploration of the juristic basis of the medieval 'corporation'. When married to the Pauline doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ it provided both a legal and theological basis for defining and locating the authority inherent in the *universitas fidelium*.

Mr. Young's *Handbook* is the second volume of the 'Indian Theological Library' to appear so far. It brings together source materials illustrating different aspects of the life of the Church up to the time of the Moslem conquests, and within the terms of reference the author has set himself it is a skilfully chosen collection. He starts out from the premise that Church History should be taught to Asian students from an Asian point of view. This does not mean that the emphasis should be laid exclusively on 'Asian Church History' while Western developments are ignored. Such a procedure would be just as stultifying as the old preoccupation with the West. The context of the Early Church was the civilization and culture of the Mediterranean world and its successor States. Yet much can be done to set this history in an Asian perspective, and on the whole the author succeeds admirably.

Mr. Young is also convinced that the history of the Church can only be studied usefully against the environment in which it grew up, the trade-routes along which it spread and the culture with which it grappled. His arrangement is not chronological but topical, and in the fields of Mission, Methods of Evangelism, Church Life, Doctrine and 'The Church and the world' he gives pride of place to the Eastward thrust of Christianity. He has drawn upon a large amount of Syriac material (some of which appears here in English for the first time), and the result is a

lively picture of the Church in East and West with the Church in Asia taking its rightful place as part of the over-all pattern, with its evangelists and martyrs, its heresies and its insights, its squabbles and its moments of greatness. The author considers that the Church in the early centuries has much to teach us, by its failures as much as by its achievements; and at the same time he is refreshingly aware that the totality of Christian life and thought in the past is worthy of study for its own sake, whether or not it ultimately took root in a particular area, and irrespective of whether it lends itself to examination clichés about 'relevance for India today'. The value of the book will depend largely upon the skill and understanding with which it is used by teachers of Church History.

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I. D. L. CLARK

Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work: by Joseph Fletcher. S.C.M. Press, London, 1967. Pp. 256. Price 25s.

This collection of essays is intended to show how Father Fletcher's approach, as outlined in his *Situation Ethics*, may be applied to particular human situations. Many of the situations selected seem so unusual as to involve a kind of special pleading for his position rather than useful examples of what it may mean in ordinary situations. No doubt this is so in some part because he feels, as he writes on the final page of the book, that 'in this age it is more strategic to keep the old morality off balance than it is to try to give balance to the often wild reactions against it'. Granted; but it would be helpful to work toward some constructive ethics as well. The author recognizes the need for a new ethic; but he doesn't take us very far towards one.

Many of the situational decisions displayed here seem much too simple. The criterion is love. But what exactly is love? These examples are supposed to expose an answer to this question. Too often this answer seems to equate love with *short-term* happiness—even sophisticated utilitarians take a longer and profounder view than this. Dr. Fletcher's evaluation of human nature is unbelievably optimistic. Invariably he seems to assume individual competence to make personal decisions. I am inclined to think that it is exactly in making personal decisions involving ourselves that we are least competent—in which we are most apt to lead ourselves astray—in which we most need help and perspective and guidance. Ideally, I feel, this perspective can be provided by our intimate fellowship—which in some situations, hopefully, will be a Christian fellowship. Love in the situation is no doubt what we seek. I doubt whether Prof. Fletcher, for all of his many telling insights, really shows us a reliable way of finding it.

Two of these essays deal with stewardship—a subject of great concern to some of our Indian churches. These should be required reading for all directors of stewardship and other concerned church leaders. A reading of them confirms my suspicion that our received theology of stewardship may be as inadequate as our received legalistic morality. I venture to hope that their impact will be as great and positive on the thinking about stewardship as the impact of the new ethics has been upon our thinking about ethics.

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Swami Vivekânanda : by Nalini Devdas. The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 1968. Pp. VI+224. Price Rs.3.50.

Sm. Nalini Devdas, the author of a succinct and clear study of the life and teachings of Sri Râmakrishna, has now given us an introduction to the spiritual doctrine of Swami Vivekânanda. Primarily meant for the Christians in India, this book, written with positive sympathy and a great care for objectivity, will help them to appreciate the ideals of a man whose influence has been, and remains, considerable. The author's task was a difficult one: Swamiji was a great *karmayogin* rather than a systematic thinker; besides, while professing his entire allegiance to the *Pure Advaita Vedânta* of Śankarâchârya, he re-interpreted and adapted this metaphysical tradition to make of it the basis of his *Practical Vedânta*. Sm. Devdas has succeeded in bringing out the leading ideas and the practical principles of Swamiji with understanding appreciation and critical clarity. After a brief Introduction which gives the concrete context of Swamiji's philosophical thinking, the writer, in a series of nine substantial chapters, studies in turn the similarities and differences between the *Comprehensive Vedânta* of Swami Vivekânanda and the spiritual teachings of Sri Râmakrishna as recorded in *The Gospel of Sri Râmakrishna*, then the doctrine concerning the Absolute and its realization as *Saccidânanda*, the teachings on the apprehension of God as Personal and His supreme nature as Impersonal Brahman, the important considerations on the right interpretation of *Mâyâ*, Swamiji's views on Individuality and Personality, his principles of epistemology and psychology, his ideas regarding man's life in the world and the quest for liberation, finally the *Practical Vedânta* and its metaphysical justification. In a Conclusion—the most personal and illuminating part of this book—Sm. Devdas raises a number of vital questions about the validity of some of the fundamental *theses* of this philosophy, briefly relates Swamiji's ideas to those of Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Radhakrishnan, and ends with a beautiful evocation of the spiritual personality and the religious quest of

Swami Vivekânanda. In brief, a useful and serious book, a precious addition to an already rich series of *Pamphlets on Religion* brought out by the Bangalore Institute.

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PIERRE FALLON, S.J.

The Phenomenon of the New Testament: by C. F. D. Moule, Studies in Biblical Theology, S.C.M. Press, London, 1967. Pp. 114. Price 12s 6d.

This is a most welcome contribution to the more positive approach of the 'New Questers'. Prof. Moule is convinced about the indispensability of history for our faith. He makes three points:

- (1) The very existence of the new 'Sect of the Nazarenes' had nothing to support it except their amazing, yet unshakable witness to their Master as having conquered death. Could such a life-and-death conviction have been due to misapprehension or a lie?
- (2) There is an almost universal acceptance throughout the N.T., including even the synoptic gospels that the man, Jesus, who had lived so recently was somehow a perfectly different sort of person, able to incorporate others in himself in some way that God alone was known to do. How could monotheistic Jews have possibly held this view—what is the explanation?
- (3) Studies of the use of the word 'Abba' and the differences in the Christologies of St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts, together with a striking marshalling of evidence to show features that have survived contrary to the purposes of the writers of the N.T. documents, form a most challenging part of the book. These features point to an estimate of the historical Jesus which is consonant with the Lord of the Apostolic faith.

The book contains ideas that are most intriguing, but by no means final. Undoubtedly they further clear the way for a search which promises to be intensely exciting.

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