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KING'S

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Genesis of Christology. Foundations for a Theology of the New Testament

Petr Pokorny. T.&T. Clark, 1987. Pp. xvi + 266. £14.95 (hb)

There have been many studies of the beginnings of christology in recent years. Why yet another one? What fresh light is there to be shed on such a well worked theme?

At first the answer is not very clear. The author is Professor of Theology and New Testament Exegesis at the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology in Prague, Czechoslovakia. An approach from an east European perspective might then hold prospects of something fresh. If that is our expectation, however, we will be disappointed. The perspective is not different because it is east European. The only difference at this point seems to be reference to texts which are less well known in the west, and lack of reference to others which may not be so well known in the east. For the rest Pokorny writes as a well informed and authoritative European New Testament scholar.

The opening chapter also whets the appetite to some degree. After critiquing some earlier studies Pokorny states his own objective: to look at the various early statements about Jesus, to see how they function in relation to the Christian communities and the developing Church; or, more briefly, to observe the interaction between social function and doctrinal (christological) statement. He wishes to take seriously the specific character of the Christian experience of faith, both as part of the historical data, and on the part of the investigator. The danger of dependence on a self-validating faith is not addressed. But Pokorny does make the important point that by taking faith seriously the investigation of the NT statements is able to relativize the distinction between a christology "from below" and a christology "from above". For the investigation will inevitably be "from below" in methodology. But the experience of faith assumes address from God and to that extent at least has a "from above" perspective (p. 11).

The second main chapter, however, on "Jesus of Nazareth", does not seem to advance discussion very far. The importance of recognizing that the earthly Jesus is the essential presupposition of christology is rightly emphasized. Pokorny will even maintain that "what Jesus said and did concerns us as the norm and presupposition of the tradition of the experience of faith" (p. 15). But the discussion thereafter simply covers well-trodden ground, in admirable summary style, to be sure, but with some uncomfortable gaps. On "the kingdom of God" in Jesus' preaching, for example, the problem of an imminent expectation unrealized is eased rather too easily (pp. 20-22). And the discussion of the Son of man sayings simply takes for granted the highly disputable claim that "the Son of man" was a title already current at the time of Jesus (pp. 23, 42, 57). The subsequent discussion also tends to be too heavily dependent on this too little examined assumption. On the other hand there are several keen insights sharply pointed, for example, a very neat treatment of faith on pp. 25-6, and of the last supper in pp. 48-52. And on pp. 32-3, the good point is made that

"Jesus distances himself from the predominant tone of the Jewish promises on behalf of the poor, which are practically always bound up with the expectation of judgment on opponents and enemies". He sums up his argument: Jesus "concentrated in the central questions of human existence and history and thereby identified himself with the will of God. In this way his message was bound up with his person" (p. 60).

But all this is really prolegomena. For the main thrust of the book begins to become clear at the end of chapter 2: "It was the Easter event that first revealed the true working of Jesus' inner life in its depth and present dimension." "Without Easter Jesus' life would be a shipwreck that would reveal only the negative side of things – the limits of human possibility" (p. 61). These statements form the launch pad from which the main investigation takes off.

Chapter 3 is the heart of the book, over a hundred pages focusing on "The Decisive Impulse". It starts simply enough with "the oldest credal formulae". But what looks at first as though it is yet another study of christological titles soon reveals itself as a highly sophisticated attempt to demonstrate that the resurrection kerygma is the fundamental christological claim. There are not a multiplicity of different christologies all with equal claim to originality. In particular, the concept of exaltation is not a different expression of the Easter event, but an interpretation which implies the resurrection kerygma (pp. 80-1). The Sayings Source may lack explicit reference to the resurrection but the authority of the words of Jesus in fact depended on the proclamation of the resurrection, so that it comes as no surprise that the sayings source did not survive independently within the canon (pp. 92-3). The differences in theological accent are to be explained not by reference to independent roots of Christianity but to their different *Sitze im Leben*. In short, all the different confessional statements in their extant form presuppose the resurrection of Jesus. Where groups did not bear testimony to this decisive impulse (the resurrection of Jesus) they could not properly be called Christian (p. 108).

Pokorny then turns to analysis of the decisive impulse itself – "the shock" which lies behind the confessional statements. He notes particularly the experience of ecstatic joy ("the earliest witness was not doctrine but joy..." – p. 235), and attempts to explain what the impulse behind it was, focusing particularly on the appearances, understood astonishingly in terms of the apocalyptic (*sic* = eschatological) category of "resurrection". This is the "something" without which the "Jesus thing" would have failed, experiences which were sufficiently strong to constitute a group identity for the first Christians and to differentiate them from others. It was in this context of enthusiastic joy that the resurrection kerygma was first formulated, though it was some time before it became crystallized in confessional statements.

The last two chapters contain a sequence of somewhat disconnected further reflections, in which Pokorny in effect attempts to substantiate the subtitle of his book, that is, to show the wider theological ramifications of

“the decisive impulse” in other facets of NT theology. He reflects, for example, on the tension between present experience and memories from the past, on the use of the OT in relation to the Easter experience, and on the relation of baptism to the resurrection kerygma. The emergence of the canon shows that the Pauline corpus, the synoptic gospels and the Johannine writings had become vital integrating traditions – all starting out from the resurrection kerygma or the variant conception of the exaltation. “The Bible”, he points out, “is not a sacred book in the manner of the Koran, which is itself intended to be the revelation. It is the witness which stands relatively nearest to the impulse and can therefore serve as a basis for further interpretation” (p. 232).

In all this there are naturally other matters with which one could take issue. There is a degree of repetition (not necessarily a bad thing) and some obscurity at times (whether of translation or text is unclear). Among many sharp and penetrating observations there are a few overstatements such as, “According to Jesus the kingdom of God has made the Old Testament now obsolete” (p. 190). The extent to which baptism was seen as an image of resurrection as well as of death is a good deal more questionable than Pokorny allows. And one could have wished that the professed interest in the social function of the confessional statements could have been developed a good deal more fully. But all in all what we have here is a most valuable and trenchant attempt to sustain in detail the highly important thesis that the Christianity of the New Testament springs from the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and nowhere else.

James D. G. Dunn

It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF

ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson. CUP, 1988. Pp. xx + 381. £37.50 (hb)

Variety and tension may be seen as the characteristics of interpreting the Bible. Sometimes Scripture is a problem, valued as part of tradition yet with no clear word to the modern situation – to remain a living resource it must be struggled over in faith; at other times it is part of the air breathed, infusing new writing with its language. It can create images or rules, demand explanation or obedience. Some will search Scripture to compose an anthology which points to the present, others will translate it in the hope of strict faithfulness to the letter of the past. Sometimes it is not “Scripture” but only the tradition of the community, at others “what is written” is the source of authority and meaning. However much all this may seem to be true of the present, it is in fact a reflection on “Scripture citing Scripture”, on, as it were, the Biblical tradition’s use of itself.

This is the theme of a tribute to Barnabas Lindars; a worthy tribute, for not only has he made a substantial contribution to this area himself, but he has few equals in the range of Scripture which he has made the object of study. He has written about, taught and carried responsibility in learned societies for, both Old and New Testament; his writings range from detailed analyses of

short passages to commentaries on whole books, and from papers for the General Synod of the Church of England to articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, encompassing substantial monographs on the way. As a tribute to his 65th birthday the volume reflects a frequent dilemma for editors and publishers: should they invite students and colleagues of the honoree to make their own varied offering to a friend and mentor, or choose a consistent theme, with contributors selected with that theme in mind, in the hope that the book will be a contribution to the subject as well as to the scholar and purchased for the former reason as well as for the latter. This is the path chosen here – the editors see the book as a “textbook for the theological student – as well as a stimulus for more mature scholars”.

A survey of the contents gives sufficient indication of the theme. An introductory essay (I. H. Marshall) “assesses recent developments”, largely in the use of the Old Testament by the New and its influence on the development of Christian theology. There follow four essays on “the Old Testament in the Old Testament”, chiefly the use within one literary genre (history, prophecy, psalms and wisdom) of themes characteristic of the others. Five essays survey the period “Between the Testaments” (very broadly defined), exploring the treatment of the Old Testament in translations, in “retelling”, in commentaries, in the use of Scripture in Qumranic and other texts of the period, and in apocalyptic. The final nine essays focus on the use of the Old Testament within the major writings or groups of writings of the New, including a discussion of the important problem of determining the form of the text used (M. Wilcox).

It is evident that contributors were assigned – and most adhered to – a strict word limit despite the considerable variation in length of texts covered, and were asked to include both a survey of existing scholarship on the subject and a degree of personal assessment or contribution to it. This has not created a tedious uniformity: the balance between the two tasks varies as, of course, does the volume of existing scholarship to be assessed. Some adopt a broad, comprehensive perspective on their texts, others choose a few in-depth selected “probes”; some restrict themselves to clear citations, others allow even probable allusions. Yet the effect is one of uniform density; the programme allows none of the occasional lightness of touch or “kite-flying” that can enliven a *Festschrift* of the other kind. Neither is it easy to isolate one or more articles for offering particular insight or stimulus. Readers will allow their own interests to determine to which chapters they turn – and they will need to do so Bible in hand. Few will browse or read cover to cover in hope of sudden illumination. Whether this is the nature of a “text book” may be a matter for debate!

Yet undoubtedly the book will prove its value as a source for understanding the issues and as a basis for further work or reflection. That it does this through its individual components and not through the emergence of a common pattern is crucial to the question. Simplistic views of the way the New Testament uses the Old are prohibited, as too are dismissive comments about their greater lack of concern for the integrity of the text. S. P.

Brock's concluding comments ("Translating the Old Testament") merit reflection: biblical translation, and interpretation, demands not only linguistic and textual skills and knowledge but also insight into and empathy with the biblical texts. "Although it can be claimed that modern translators are often better equipped in the former respect than their predecessors in antiquity, it would be arrogant to assume that they excel them in the latter respect as well."

Judith Lieu

The Sermon on the Mount. An Exegetical Commentary

Georg Strecker. T.&T. Clark, 1988. Pp. 223. £9.95

Georg Strecker is one of the most respected names in Matthaean studies and this translation is to be welcomed respectfully, if (as far as this reviewer is concerned) somewhat ambivalently. His exegesis is thorough and professional, critical in a thoroughly responsible way – at least if one does not wish to apply Occam's razor to pre-Matthaean sources; Q (and Q *Matt.* and *Luke*) is taken for granted. He gives a clear and reasoned reconstruction of the tradition-history of the various elements of the Sermon, allowing more to go back to Jesus than some would, though his criteria are sometimes a bit wooden. A bibliography precedes each small section and there are extensive references in the endnotes, mostly to German writings naturally, but he has packed his immense learning into only 175 pages of text. He is well aware of the contemporary importance of the Sermon for a world bent on self-annihilation, but rightly eschews short cuts. "Before its meaning is translated into the present, we must hear its original statement. In the process we will find opening up, precisely in the strangeness of this text that belongs to the past, not only an unmistakable identity, but also a specific relevance for today" (p. 23). He has brief but pointed things to say about earlier types of interpretation, from Luther to the Peace Movement, and nails a number of false approaches in the final chapter.

Strecker himself distinguishes three levels: Jesus' radical call for repentance under the imminence of God's kingdom; the early communities' adaptation of Jesus' teaching to provide rules to live by; and Matthew's own masterful completion of this trajectory by resharpening Jesus' radical demand, while generalizing it into rules to guide the church on its journey through time, in the light of his failure to return.

Resharpening, yes; generalizing rules – here doubts begin. On the one hand Strecker denies that Matthew has an eye either on contemporary scribes and Pharisees (they are just a foil for Jesus' positive assertions), or on contemporary antinomians (the "false prophets" of 7:15 have no specific relevance, and are not to be connected with those who say "Lord, Lord" in 7:21 ff). He is right to warn against trying to relate every remark in the gospels to some contemporary phenomenon, yet dating Matthew after AD 70, as Strecker does, it is hard not to see Matthew arming Christians against a Jewish counter-reformation; and his additions to Mark at 24:10-12, picking up the warnings of 7:15 ff, do look more pointed than Strecker allows.

On the other hand he seems too ready to detect Matthew and his predecessors' provision of practical guidance for the present, and to interpret vivid and humorous pictures rather woodenly as rules. For example, 5:23-24 "contains a community rule", but five lines later "it contains a warning: reconciliation comes before cultic practice!". Exactly: a warning; and Strecker elsewhere sharply distinguishes Jesus' prophetic warnings and the community's rules. Then on oaths: in 5:36 he says Matthew meets the practical needs by making "Yes yes, No no" into a substitute oath. This far from obvious exegesis is perhaps influenced by the presupposition. As for alms-giving, prayer and fasting (6:1-18), these three rules of piety are pre-Matthaean, but cannot go back to Jesus: the "wisdom-like structure is quite different from the call to repentance based on the nearness of the kingdom of God and from the radical ethical demand of Jesus" (p. 102 – yet on p. 108 and in other places he notes that the mixture of apocalyptic and wisdom elements is characteristic of Jesus' proclamation). The Christian practice of fasting is very different from Jesus' word about the presence of the bridegroom (9.15; Mark 2:15). But why could Jesus not have said both? Strecker is blind to the possibility of current practices being humorously used to make a point, rather than to give rival rules. Though stressing the strangeness of the text, he is not always able to discard the spectacles of Western logic, and seems out of touch with Jewish rhetoric and humour. He mentions Schlatter's suggestion that 6:2 presupposes a custom that "the synagogue attendant blew into his trumpet (*sic* – for *in das Horn stieß*) when an especially large sum was given", but hope that his tongue is in his cheek is dashed by his inability to decide whether *tameion* (6:6) is a store-house or a lean-to shed, and by his dismissal of "the idea that the false prophets will actually be clothed in garments of sheepskin, as is often presumed on the basis of Mark 1:6" (p. 162), as "hardly likely".

Strecker seems often blind to the *character* of the Sermon's commands, which C. H. Dodd and John Robinson emphasized: not community rules but flashlight pictures, appealing through the imagination of the will. "If thine eye is evil . . ."

The feeling of woodenness is aggravated by the translation, which (e.g.) takes over the German numbering of the Commandments without comment (so that the fifth is about murder – *absit omen!*). It is unidiomatic, and often wrong (taking the first dictionary meaning of a word, regardless of fit), and the translator is sometimes out of his depth. Surely publishers should have a translation vetted.

It is a pity because the book has solid merits. It is in many respects acute, subtle and illuminating. Strecker is particularly good at bringing out the eschatological colouring of everything in the Sermon, but subordinating this to Matthew's magisterial Christology: everything is relevant still as bringing home Christ's total demand, brought to its sharpest point in love of the enemy.

John Sweet

Women and Early Christianity

Susanne Heine. SCM Press, 1987. Pp. vi + 182. £6.95

Christianity and the Goddesses

Susanne Heine. SCM Press, 1988. Pp. vi + 183. £6.95

The translation of these two books by Susanne Heine, who teaches in the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Vienna, makes available a self-critical assessment of feminist theological thinking which provides a valuable counter to some of its more extravagant claims but in no way belittles the insights it has offered. Her own hope is to distinguish “real results from the products of wishful thinking”, and in this she is largely successful.

Women and Early Christianity is essentially a methodological study: what are the limits of the historical method when applied to evaluating the place of women in the traditions about Jesus or Paul or the church fathers? Will claims made by Elaine Pagels and others in a feminist interest on behalf of Gnosticism stand up to serious scrutiny? Many shrewd points are made at the expense of both traditional forms of study and of feminist claims; each has too often been guilty of taking both biblical and patristic texts out of their cultural context. In this process both Paul and Tertullian receive some interesting rehabilitation. The “associative fantasy” indulged in both by feminists and by their opponents when sexual matters are at issue has meant that serious use of the social sciences to clarify the possible range of male-female relationships has in effect become impossible. But that does not necessarily mean that to understand the reasons for particular developments rules out any criticism; the last stage in the New Testament, represented by 1 Tim. 2, is seen as “a slap in the face for the Jesus movement” of a deeply regrettable kind.

In *Christianity and the Goddesses* the methodological points set out in the earlier book are taken for granted, and attention is now turned to claims made on behalf of a primitive matriarchy and the various Canaanite goddesses whose claims are so emphatically rejected by the Old Testament; we are here in a world “between myth and utopia” which has often prevented serious and balanced assessment of the assertions that are being made. This in turn leads to a consideration of the use of paternal and maternal language for the description of God. Some powerful points are made, reaching a climax in what is described as a sermon, *Jesa Christa, a Critique of the Ideal*, which warns that “those who divinize women and stylize them into an ideal are as guilty as those who brand them as demons”.

All those who attempt to take a mediating position are liable to come under attack from those who *know* that their views are the only proper ones, and Prof. Heine will no doubt bear that kind of criticism with equanimity. If her criticisms of extravagant feminist claims have been more prominent in this review it should certainly be noted that they are balanced by some equally trenchant comments on male chauvinist views. More difficult for the English-speaking reader will be the frequent references to contemporary debate within the German-speaking intellectual world, little of which is probably

known in this country; certain parts of *Christianity and the Goddesses*, in particular, become very obscure without detailed knowledge of that debate. But with that reservation these books should be warmly welcomed; they are translated with John Bowden’s customary clarity and offer an introduction to a range of issues not readily available from other sources.

Richard Coggins

The Moral World of the First Christians

Wayne Meeks. S.P.C.K., 1987. Pp. 182. £6.95

“I wonder what it all really felt like.” The question might pass across one’s mind as one thinks of a first-century *homme moyen sensuel* listening, say, to Paul expounding Isaiah. Were his reactions very different indeed from ours when he thought about life and death, politics and sex; when he heard the claims made about Jesus? If so, in what ways did he react differently from us? In the background of serious conversation in any age there lies an unspoken context of attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, taken entirely for granted by all concerned. Perhaps this is specially so when the conversation is about values and behaviour. If only we could “get at” this unspoken context of conversation about choices and duties in the case of the first Christians, how much more accurately we should read the texts they left behind!

It is this mental environment of moral discourse in the communities of first-century Christians that Professor Meeks investigates. For by the “moral world” of his title he means, at least roughly, what Clifford Geertz (whom he quotes at p. 15) intends by “ethos”: “the tone, character, and quality of [a people’s] life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; ... the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world”. With this end in view, Meeks offers a broad account, with sharply detailed illustrations, of the background and content of ethical theory in the Hellenistic world aside from Judaism, and then of moral stances – in the widest sense – among Jews and early Christians. A first chapter sets the social scene with the masterly touch we have already encountered in *The First Urban Christians*: here is a fine *tour d’horizon* of all that was connoted by the term *polis*. Platonism and the Stoa are then presented through succinct accounts of the moral outlook of Plutarch and Musonius Rufus. In his description of the Cynics the views of the more “austere” and the “mild” are distinguished (p. 55). On the Jewish side, Ben Sira and Qumran receive six pages each, Philo (who speaks, not for Jews “who will assimilate into the high culture of Alexandria, but [for] those who, like himself, want to be at home in both worlds”, p. 84) a little less. A brief treatment of the Mishna lays some stress on its social setting, which is that of the Palestinian village (endorsing Neusner, p. 89). In chapter 4, Meeks’ “stalking” (p. 97) of the first Christians brings him close to his quarry, whom he describes in a fine summary presentation of the sociologists’ overview of Christian origins. Likeness and distinctiveness in relation to existing models for communal self-awareness are succinctly indicated, as a prelude to showing how, in specifically moral matters, what was shared with the environment is to be balanced against what was innovative. This last concern is then made the subject of

the closing chapter, "The Grammar of Early Christian Morals". Meeks surveys in turn the morality of 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, Matthew, the Apocalypse, the Didache, and Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*.

Some of this will be familiar to most readers: the book is successfully designed to make good sense to those without previous reading in the subject. At the same time, Meeks corrects some current understandings ("it is debatable", for instance, "how distinctive the different [philosophical] schools really were in Roman times. Certainly they influenced each other considerably", p. 41) and has many fresh and stimulating things to say. The question remains, however: how far has he (or could he have) achieved his aim? This is a masterly contribution to the history of ideas. How far has it enabled us to grasp "what it all really felt like" – to sense the "moral... style and mood" of those about whom he writes?

One point at least emerges clearly. In the "essential dialectic between community and self" which has so much to do with character and identity (p. 12), the former term – insofar as we take it as indicating the total fabric of the social order – was a "given". It was not thinkable that one could, still less that one had a duty to, work for what we call "change" in society. Those Cynics who, as Meeks shows, wished to unsettle the "ethos" of their world perhaps faintly adumbrate that impossibility. They certainly did not attempt more (p. 55). In his valuable analysis of the moral thought of 1 Corinthians, Meeks has something to say about "reversal". But it is a reversal of perceptions, not, save at the level of private relationships, of praxis. Even the Apocalypse urges reversal of perceptions: it utters "no call for revolutionary action" (p. 146). The focus of moral attitudes was local: thus a recurrent topic in Meeks' account of both Jews and Christians is that of relations with neighbours. Perhaps, then, the "style and mood" – for most if not all of the groupings discussed – had to do with "what makes me different?" and "what makes us different?", in other words, with forms of self-image and self-awareness. So at least Meeks seems to judge. Specific issues in terms of which the "difference" might be expressed – duty to parents and to the indigent, slavery, sexual behaviour – receive relatively little space.

Nevertheless, there is nothing nebulous about this study. Where the focus can be sharp – and that is most of the way along Meeks' agenda – it is. No reader can put this book down without a better appreciation than before of the precise network of constraints, rather different from those we know, surrounding the choices the first Christians had to make in dealing both with fellow-believers and with outsiders.

C. J. A. Hickling

Biblical Hermeneutics. An Introduction

Duncan S. Ferguson. SCM, 1987. Pp. iv + 220. £7.95

This book falls into three main parts, entitled respectively "The Issues of Biblical Hermeneutics", "The Practice of Hermeneutics", and "Hermeneutics in the

Life of the Church". Ferguson's basic contention is that Scripture needs to be interpreted anew for each generation in its own categories of understanding and relevance, and that the interpreter should have an "internalist" position of faith but, equally, use the historical method in the interpretive task. The bulk of the book, however, while consistently advancing this argument, is less concerned with developing a thesis than with giving a brief outline and explanation of the main concerns and technical terms that hermeneutics involves.

Thus, Section 1 begins with an attempt to define what hermeneutics is basically about; Ferguson sees it primarily as the task of "hearing" what an ancient text has to say, which involves the rules and principles of interpretation, but so as to allow the past to inform the present and point to the future. In specifying more clearly what this "hearing" involves he lays great stress, here and throughout, on the importance of "preunderstanding", which he defines (p. 6) as "a body of assumptions and attitudes which a person brings to the perception and interpretation of reality or any aspect of it". What he means by this is further spelt out in the "taxonomy" of preunderstanding that he sets out; that is, a list and brief explication of the categories, functions and correlations (with the subject to be interpreted) of preunderstanding. But Ferguson's emphasis is especially on faith as "the preunderstanding which is able to rightly grasp God's self-disclosure" (p. 18; those who do not like their infinitives split will find their teeth set on edge in this book!), integrally bound up with historical self-understanding (p. 22: "But the preunderstanding of faith is dependent upon God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ attested to in Scripture").

Yet, Ferguson argues, even with faith and historical method, the interpreter usually brings other assumptions as well, especially concerning Scripture, and he indicates some main positions relating to its unity, diversity, and character and style; he also gives a brief discussion of some principal concepts frequently used in relation to the bible: revelation, Word of God, inspiration, authority, tradition and function. Because "biblical faith has found revelation centered primarily in certain historical events, chief of which is the coming of Christ" (p. 40), Ferguson sees revelation, history and faith, and their interrelation, as the crucial issues of hermeneutics. He traces the developments, concerning revelation and history, from Kant through Schleiermacher and Hegel to the 20th century, especially Barth and Bultmann. With Bultmann we find effectively the separation of faith and history, but there is strong reaction against this in post-Bultmannian theology, particularly in Pannenberg's understanding of faith *as* history. This whole discussion has inevitably raised with it the questions of the historical Jesus and the resurrection; but in both cases, Ferguson contends, the historian's judgment is dependent on his preunderstanding, and he must have an open mind to weigh the evidence.

In Section II, Ferguson addresses the question of "ways of preserving the Bible as the Scripture of the church" (p. 68), and adopts the customary distinction between general and special hermeneutics. Hence first he takes up the issue of an overall methodology, related to basic principles about context, language, history and

culture. He stresses that “the Bible should be approached with all the resources that historical and linguistic scholarship make available” (p. 187): textual, literary, source, form and redaction criticism, and language analysis. It is, however, a further step from biblical criticism to a “conception of the Bible which preserves it as the Scripture of the church, as authoritative for theology and instructive for the common life of the Christian community” (p. 79), and to this end, Ferguson offers a brief discussion of the four traditional concepts of canon, history, Word of God and authority.

Special hermeneutics, on the other hand, is “concerned with establishing definitions and principles which guide in the interpretation of special literary forms and topical areas” (p. 85). Hence, Ferguson notes first the need for the interpreter to come to terms with the sheer diversity of the biblical material, and he therefore touches briefly on various attempts to impose some order and unity on the whole (by means of typology, allegory and analogy); he also notes the great variety of language and figures of speech used in the bible (introducing and explaining some technical terms) and varieties of genre within the biblical corpus (law, history, poetry, prophecy, doctrine, apocalyptic), and concludes with ten general principles of hermeneutics. Finally in this section, he deals with the question of how Scripture can be normative and authoritative for theology, and enunciates ten principles for how the theologian should operate in relation to Scripture. He then indicates how Scripture should be used in worship (preaching and liturgy), in teaching and pastoral care and in spiritual formation and ethical decision making, and concludes with seven hermeneutical maxims for using the Bible in Christian nurture.

Section III is concerned with examining the hermeneutical approaches of some representative interpreters of the Bible. Here, Ferguson devotes a fair amount of space to Origen, noting the creative value of his allegorical method but criticizing it for its failure to be truly historical, and to Luther, whom he sees as important for his emphasis on historical method, although at the same time uncritical in his use of Scripture and too prone to apply a christological hermeneutic to the whole of it. He then looks more briefly at Schleiermacher and Dilthey, approving of their emphasis on the need for creative empathy between interpreter and biblical author but criticizing their failure to escape from the limitations of the psychological method and its disregard for historical context; and finally, and again briefly, he deals with Bultmann and representatives of some of the main hermeneutical positions taken up in the post-Bultmannian period. He concludes that this survey shows clearly that all these interpreters bring some measure of preunderstanding to their work, and that the particular hermeneutic fails if either faith or proper historical method are lacking.

This summary does not do full justice to Ferguson’s work. It has to be said, however, that a great deal of the book (especially in Section I and II) reads too much like a catalogue of terms, with brief and rather bland definitions attached. Because of the way the book is organized, there is also a certain amount of repetition (for example, the same basic descriptive material about the

bible in both Sections I and II, and the discussions of 20th century theology in Section I and III). The book is deliberately intended as a limited basic outline, with brief sectional bibliographies, but even so it is surprising that there is no mention of, for example, Thistelton’s *Two Horizons* (although Gadamer is dealt with briefly), and very little of narrative theology or liberation theology as hermeneutical methods, while the brief mention of structuralism (p. 78) does not even touch on post-modernism, intertextuality or reader-response approaches.

Above all, it is a pity that there are no specific *examples* of hermeneutical methods applied to particular texts, which would have been potentially much more stimulating, and informative of what hermeneutics is really supposed to be about, than the rather turgid lists of terms and rules with which the book is replete. The book is of course meant to be merely a basic introduction to a complex area, but it is precisely for such a purpose and for a non-expert readership that well-chosen illustrations would be especially helpful, particularly since the “received” version of hermeneutics that Ferguson presents in fact draws on some rather outmoded and unsatisfactory classificatory categories (of which the various genres to which the biblical material is assigned are merely one example). Indeed, it would have been interesting to see more of Ferguson’s own hermeneutic approach, too briefly and self-deprecatingly set out at the end in what he terms a “Modest Proposal”, where he suggests that the guiding norm for the use of scripture in the church should be the inauguration of God’s kingly rule in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. He indicates, movingly, in outline how this might be worked out (p. 194):

“The purpose of God’s kingly rule, epitomized in Jesus, is the liberation of all peoples. This is the message of the Bible. This is the mission of the church, which claims the resurrected Jesus as Lord, to challenge all forms of oppression and to help relieve human suffering in all its diabolical manifestations. God is not indifferent to the plight of the poor, the hungry, the illiterate, the victims of war and prejudice, and those oppressed by military, political, and economic tyranny. The church has no choice but to dive in and help those whose worldly address lies within one of the many suburbs of hell. It has no choice but to accept the partnership with God in the creation of a better world”.

Thus, Ferguson shows clearly how he meets his own concern for Scripture to be “interpreted anew for each generation in its own categories of understanding and relevance”, and it is an approach that deserves to be taken very seriously, not least by those of us who, in our concern to find the “objective” meaning of the text, can properly be accused of failing to relate the text to the real world in which we live. This book, despite its limitations, is worth reading and using for reference. But if you want something to ponder and potentially apply to your own reading of Scripture, it might be worth beginning at the end!

Andrew Chester

The Gnostic Scriptures. A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions

Bentley Layton. SCM, 1987. Pp. xlii + 526. £25

Since the publication of the Nag Hammadi library, interest in the study of Gnostic literature has grown apace. This volume, which presents nearly all the relevant texts in a new English translation, is thus to be warmly welcomed. Prior to the discoveries at Nag Hammadi, much of our knowledge of Gnosticism came from reports of church fathers such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius. One particularly valuable feature of the present collection is that Layton has included translations of all the relevant sections from patristic sources to place alongside the Gnostic texts themselves. As well as translating the texts, Layton has also given extended introductions to the various writings, dealing with different facets of Gnostic studies and placing the texts in their (possible) historical contexts. The result is an extremely useful resource for studying these Gnostic writings.

The volume must however be used critically. Every translation is itself an interpretation and hence Layton's translations involve interpretative decisions which are at times quite wide-ranging. However, the chosen format of the volume as a whole precludes noting such instances in the footnotes. Perhaps more questionable is Layton's decision to collect the texts chosen into various well-defined groupings of "Classic Gnostic Scripture", Valentinianism, Thomas literature, Hermetic literature, etc. The views represented by Layton are of course well known to specialists and by no means idiosyncratic. However, they are not universally held. *Do* the so-called "classic Gnostic" texts represent the views of a single, well-defined Gnostic community? *Is* all the Thomas literature to be considered on its own and separately from other (related) Gnostic texts? And *is* the Gospel of Thomas a source of very primitive forms of sayings of Jesus? The unwary reader might easily be misled here into thinking that scholarly views are more monochrome than in fact they are.

One slightly irritating feature of the volume is that the titles of various works, especially some of the Nag Hammadi texts, have been changed from what has, up till now, been their standard title. The Apocalypse of Adam is now the "Revelation of Adam" (abbreviated "RAd"). Were such changes necessary? Further, not quite all the texts one might have expected are included here. For example, the tractate Melchizedek from Nag Hammadi, and the Gospel of Mary from BG 8502 are not here. However, such omissions are amply counterbalanced by the wealth of patristic material included here as well as the fresh translations provided of some of the Hermetic literature. Used with care, this volume will undoubtedly be an invaluable resource for all students of Gnostic literature.

C. M. Tuckett

The Trinitarian Faith

Thomas F. Torrance. T.&T. Clark, 1988. Pp. 345. £18.95

There is an undoubted change in climate when moving north of the border theologically. This is expressed classically, perhaps, in the enduring contribution and even domination of Thomas Torrance on the theological scene in Scotland. Alongside the theological rigour runs a continuing respect for the work of Karl Barth, and this is manifest in this latest one-volume dogmatics. The entire argument is consistently Patristic, as the subject matter is the place of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed in the continuing life of the Church, and as the controlling basis of Christian faith. Indeed, so dominant is the Patristic material that well over 1000 footnotes catalogue Torrance's witnesses to the argument as his thesis unfolds. It is a pity that there is no concordance to these references, since almost certainly one of the continuing uses of this book will be as a compendium of learning in this realm of theological study. It is also regrettable that there is no index to modern authors cited, nor indeed more engagement with other contemporary writers, as we shall note later.

The book is clearly structured. Torrance begins by setting the scene and discussing the normative significance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan tradition. He then develops from this a chapter which makes clear why the Nicene fathers saw the need to develop incarnational theology in the manner in which they did, and why the *homoousion* played such a central part in this. The book then devotes two chapters to the nature of God, beginning with "the almighty Creator". Torrance then takes us through a discussion of "the incarnate Saviour" and finally in this part of his argument he moves on to a critical discussion of the development of the *homoousion* of the Spirit. The concluding chapters look at the nature of the Church, and finally at trinitarian belief. This brief outline, however, and even the chapter headings, conceal the remarkable dominance of a massive christological structure throughout his argument. One of the essential questions that must be asked of Torrance's thesis is: to what extent is a coherent model of the Trinity vitiated by an overdeveloped christological core? Despite the various headings relating to the nature of God and then to christology, chapters three to five all concentrate on the construction of this christological core. In classical Barthian manner, Torrance argues that we can know nothing of God, except that which he has revealed of himself through Jesus Christ. Ignoring for one moment the implicit denial of natural theology in this argument, a correlative question presents itself about the balance of the persons in the resultant Trinitarian model, which Torrance describes.

Part of this argument centres on Torrance's assertion that Patristic Christianity was not corrupted by Hellenistic thought in the way that many historical theologians have suggested. Instead, Torrance believes that Christian theology was revolutionary in its "Christianizing of the Hellenistic thought patterns" in which it found itself set. The Hebraic origins of the gospel were crucial in this process, Torrance argues. Other critical commentators may, however, want to suggest that the truth lies somewhere in between these

two extremes. No thought pattern is likely to remain uncoloured by the culture in which it finds itself set, and Patristic Christianity is no exception to this rule. Hellenistic and Hebraic influences combine in a complex manner, indeed at times may be radically metamorphosed by the circumstances of history. This seems to be disallowed by Torrance's implicit historiography. Hilary, Athanasius and the other Nicene Fathers are given blanket coverage, and at times these central chapters read rather like a rhythmic repetition of the Quincunque Vult.

There is a feeling that the book begins to loosen up, once Torrance feels he has established his over-riding point. There is a subtle and constructive discussion of passibility, for example, on pages 185 ff, where Torrance argues that God "redeems our passibility in his impassibility", and thus that God is not unaffected by the sufferings and afflictions of his people. His critical analysis of the part played by the Cappadocian Fathers in the establishment of the *homoousion* of the Spirit is also realistic and perceptive. He sees the Cappadocians as bequeathing two problems to their successors. The first is the danger of tritheism and incoherence within the Trinity itself; the second is an over-emphasis of the Father at the expense of the other two persons of the Trinity. Against this must be held the potential weakness of Torrance's own model with its radical emphasis on the person of Christ. Indeed in his model, even the Church is affected by this massive Christology, and the pneumatological models of the Church mooted by Schillebeeckx are not reflected at all in these pages.

It is in the final two chapters that there is the most lively and critical discussion. His reflections on the nature of catholicity and apostolicity are timely, as are his comments on second baptism. In the final chapter there is some repetition of earlier argument, but also some useful material on the changing directions of the early Fathers, and the different emphasis at different periods within patristic history.

Ultimately, despite the immense learning displayed in the book, I found myself disappointed. It was in the lively discussion of the final chapter that the reasons for my discontent became plain to me. Torrance's analytical reflection here was prepared to ask questions of points that he had hitherto taken for granted. There is an unassailable feeling throughout much of the rest of the book that Trinitarian dogma is revealed in much the same way that propositional views of revelation have argued for with regard to the biblical text. There is thus no engagement with modern writers and no attempt to broach issues raised by other notable Patristic theologians such as Geoffrey Lampe, in his various writings discussing Trinitarian faith. My dissatisfaction is, then, with Torrance's reluctance to use his immense erudition by allowing it to engage with contemporary historical-critical Patristic commentators.

Stephen Platten

Being and Relation. A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism

Carver T. Yu. Scottish Academic Press, 1987. Pp. xxiv + 239. £15.00 (hb)

Cultures are rather like pictures: if they are to be seen for what they are, a certain distancing is required. That is why we must always be grateful when observers from other traditions give us something of the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us. Carver Yu is one such: a Chinese theologian who is yet deeply immersed in the history of Western culture, which, with justification, he sees to be sunk in crisis. The latest in the "Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge" series, two others of which were reviewed with less than complete enthusiasm in a recent edition of this journal, this is an important book, and deserves wide influence.

An introduction charts the relativism and pessimism which the author observes in the West, and also remarks on the danger that China will suffer similarly. But while Chinese thought seeks the essence of Being in humanity, the Western tradition, he claims, conceives the world in abstraction from its relation with man. The Western problem is first charted with the help of writers like Christopher Dawson, Eliot, Kafka and Becket. What the author observes is an erosion of the personal, something which is not restored by those, like Husserl and Heidegger, who are aware of the crisis but fail to transcend it.

Carver Yu believes that the source of the malaise is not Descartes and modern philosophy, as is often claimed, but is to be sought far further back, in the very roots of the Western philosophical tradition. In reaction against the crude anthropomorphism and interventionism of the Greek gods, the pre-Socratic philosophers began a quest for the "thing-in-itself", reality identified in abstraction from its relation with the rest of the universe. The outcome is an understanding of the world in which the perceiving mind is unrelated to the world it perceives, and the "building blocks" of reality unrelated to other entities. The problem is seen at its worst in its effect on modern social philosophy, which, in the form it took after Descartes leads to an atomistic understanding of society which is also intellectualistic, contractual and utilitarian.

The urgent requirement in the face of this alienation is a rediscovery of human kinship with the world – "Man within the Community of Beings" as the final section heading has it. The heart of the book's major thesis is a long chapter on the contribution a biblical conception of being can make to a process of social reconstruction. The biblical orientation to history conceives human identity as a process of becoming through communion and involvement. Biblical openness to the future entails the openness of realms of being towards one another. "'Reality' is perceived more as a drama of unfolding and fulfilment of being through interaction and communion than as a mere collocation of things with distinct identities" (p. 199).

Despite the fact that what Dr Yu says about the biblical world view is important and true, he does not go far enough. It is not adequate simply to oppose a biblical relational view to Western dualism and individualism. The early Greek philosophers were surely right to reject the mythological theology of their tradition. Christianity rejects it too, but it rejects it on the basis of a different theology, a conceptuality by means of which the relation of God and world can be understood relationally without interventionist myth. The task which this book essays cannot succeed without closer attention to the doctrine of God, and that means here the Trinity. That is how the early theologians solved the problem, and that is how it must be approached now if we are to avoid an apparent biblicism.

But that is a counsel of perfection. In the analysis and diagnosis it provides, and in the steps it takes towards an alternative, this is a book to be greeted enthusiastically as an important theological contribution to one of the most important debates of our age.

Colin Gunton

Easter in Ordinary. Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God

Nicholas Lash. SCM Press, 1988. Pp. 311. £12.95

The aim of this book is said at the outset to be to “construct an argument in favour of one way of construing or interpreting human experience as experience of God”. In fact, however, there is a noticeable scarcity of direct and sustained argument, the case being instead made out through a series of reviews of previous thinkers who either support or oppose the author’s thesis, a procedure which reflects his conviction that human thinking must invariably consist of “a process of critical remembrance” of “the cultural, historical processes which produced us, and in which we find ourselves situated”. It also means that the book conforms fully to his daunting injunction that “serious theological reflection... is, and should always be made to be *hard work*”.

The first third of the book is devoted to a critique, by means of an extended consideration of William James, of a currently fashionable opposing view of “religious experience”, much in evidence in contemporary interest in “mysticism”, that it is a “state of excited feeling... private to the individual alone”, which is assumed to be “communion with some ‘superhuman consciousness’”. This notion, which is rejected on the grounds that since all experience is culturally mediated “there is no such thing as pure or raw experience”, is condemned as an “infantilist” and “dehumanizing” “abdication of social and intellectual responsibility”.

In its middle reaches, the book meanders through a series of less ambitious discussions of a variety of thinkers – Hegel, Fries, Schleiermacher, Newman and, above all, Von Hügel – all of whom in Lash’s view in one way or another are “getting warmer” in that they move towards the conception that the spiritual must be seen as one element in a triad of reciprocally influential factors,

the other two being the “scientific” or “intellectual” on the one hand, and the “social”, “personal” and “political” on the other.

Only in the closing chapters does it become clear that Lash’s position consists essentially of an endorsement of the later Rahner’s account of “transcendental experience” crossed with Buber’s personalism; that is, with Rahner, he regards “experience of God” as that “further dimension” said to suffuse *all* human experiences as the obscure sense of their overall “point” or “drift”, which is attended to, if at all, usually only in extreme situations such as the prospect of death. Rahner is, however, criticized for “underplaying” man’s social nature, an “individualism” attributed to “oversight or inattention”. Buber is invoked to remedy the defect, but Lash does not so much argue for the truth of his account of human nature as assume his pronouncements to be “prophetic”.

A wide range of controversial issues are raised in this book, and there is space to note only three possible inconsistencies in Lash’s position. First, while he repeatedly disavows “fideism”, he endorses Rahner’s description of transcendental experience as “dark, threatening and ambiguous”, and suggest that it therefore poses a “practical dilemma” resolvable only by an “effort of trust”, “commitment”, and “risk”, so that what we need is not “epistemology” but “ethics”. Lash therefore uses his intellect only to satisfy himself that the question of God must be resolved by “a choice between acceptance and rejection”. But, surely this brings his position well within the range of views which have come to be termed “fideist”?

Secondly, his insistence that one must avoid “falling into the trap of supposing God to be a person... which he certainly is not, for he is not *an anything*” is hard to square with his repeated endorsement of Buber’s dictum that “the relation to a human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God”, for how can one have a personal relationship with what is not a person? Actually, Lash says that we can “use personal language” of God because he has “addressed” in “his *self*-statement in the flesh and texture of history... his imperishable *self*-gift”. But do we not mean by a human “person” precisely a “self” (and not “a thing”) which can “address” others (and so must be “a” person) even though the *persona* can never fully express its abidingly mysterious inner being? If so, the term “person” would seem to be a uniquely appropriate metaphor for what Lash has in mind by the term “God”.

Thirdly, Lash hedges around the few specifically Christian affirmations he makes with such radical qualifications that he appears to be moving to the margins of orthodox Christianity. Thus, immediately after his apparently unequivocal affirmation of the Incarnation he adds the caveat that “the utterance is not the utterer, that what we ‘see’ in him is the image of the Imageless One... the clarification which he supplies remaining... impenetrable darkness”. Besides, it remains a “contestable” notion and we are “brought to acknowledge our responsibility to recommend (it) to others” only because “doctrine authorizes” it. But is this submission to Christian doctrine the result of an impartial scrutiny of all religious traditions leading us to recognize the superiority of catholic Christianity? No,

because there is no “neutral standpoint, no place that is not some place” from which the claims of various traditions can be “tested and compared”. And yet Lash does eventually come up with a litmus test for the validity of religious traditions: we can retain our allegiance to Christianity in the last analysis, he says, only “in the measure that, through working with these (creedal) rules, we are again and again confronted with the possibility of conversion” to that “basic trust” in each other which is the *sine qua non* for the development of genuine personal relationships. But has Lash really grounds for denying that “basic trust” can never be found outside the Christian tradition? If he were to concede that it can, and also acknowledge that far from being hermetically locked into any one tradition, whether “Christian” or any other, we are all nowadays open to the four winds whether we like it or not, he would find he has worked himself well clear of any *exclusively* Christian allegiance.

R. M. Burns

Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis. A South African Perspective

John W. de Gruchy. Collins Flame, 1987. Pp. 183. £7.95

The author is professor of Christian studies at the University of Cape Town; his subject is the way in which both the practice of Christian theology and the exercise of the church’s ministry are qualified by their cultural context and historical “crisis”. Professor de Gruchy exemplifies this from his own situation where, it is obvious, he is passionately committed to the causes of freedom and justice.

In the first chapter, he considers the church’s ministry as an integral part of the “community of faith”. He observes that the image of the ministry has changed from one time and place to another, and notes the fact that in times of crisis it is likely that the minister will model himself uncritically upon such an image. Such images, he believes, are conditioned by culture: “as much influenced by that as it is by theology and Christian tradition” (p. 22). Here then is a dilemma. Ministry is exercised only within a particular culture, and, to be exercised effectively, it must serve the needs of the people of that culture. Does this make the church’s ministry a chameleon; taking its colour only from its immediate surroundings? This, the author argues, is the danger, for “while it is evangelically necessary for the ordained ministry to relate to its particular historical and cultural context, we also need to be aware that cultural adaptation often occurs in ways which are detrimental to ministry and mission” (pp.37 f). In place of this, de Gruchy seeks a concept that will embrace the diversities of the Christian tradition as well as the varieties of cultural context, finding the minister’s essential function in “practical theology”: “the pastor has to be a practical theologian who is able to discern the meaning of the gospel within the particular context of his or her ministry” (p. 40).

In the second chapter, he relates the practical theology of the pastor to the prophetic tradition of the Old

Testament. He traces the “domestication” of prophecy down the centuries, and argues that it is this which has led the church until very recently to ignore the important biblical concepts of justice and oppression. (Has the neglect really been as complete as all that? Perhaps St Thomas deserves more than his one reference on p. 51 . . .) Though he notes the “need to be constantly aware of equating one’s own perceptions with the prophetic ‘Thus says the Lord’” (p. 86), the means by which a prophet escapes this danger are not spelt out.

The third chapter, devoted to the problem of suffering, is a wide-ranging survey of recent contributions to the subject. The author’s views are summed up on p. 123: “The credibility of the church’s testimony today is bound up not so much with its intellectual ability to defend the faith, to solve the theodicy problem as traditionally stated, though I do not underestimate the importance of that, but far more with the willingness of the church to participate in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of the world. And this means to share in the struggle for justice.” Practical theology passes necessarily into practical (and political) commitment.

In the final chapter, he returns to the task of the ordained minister, and in particular the “theological formation of the People of God”. He needs to have given more attention to the criticism of prophecy; perhaps an argument should have been developed to the effect that the prophetic word of liberation, with all its attendant dangers, must be tested against the common mind of the church. Is part of the “practical theology” of the *whole* People of God the job of testing its prophets? There are parts of the world other than southern Africa (as the Lambeth bishops were acutely reminded) where the “struggle for justice” is an ambiguous concept; – where the spirits of the prophets need an urgent and a penetrating discernment.

Not all de Gruchy’s insights are new, as the writer of his preface remarks. His style makes laborious reading; and the appeal at every point to contemporary writers is at times wearisome, especially when the matter is as age-old as the problem of pain. Nonetheless, it is too easy to list the stylistic faults of a book conceived against a background of injustice, and written with so much personal commitment. As an insight into what it means to bear witness to the Gospel in southern Africa today, it is moving. And if some of his themes are familiar, it is heartening to know that familiar Christian truths can still be stated with integrity, passion, and effect, in the context of so great a crisis.

Peter Atkinson

The Option for Inclusive Democracy. A theological-ethical study of appropriate social values for South Africa.

Bernard Lategan, Johann Kinghorn, Lourens du Plessis, Etienne de Villiers. Centre for Hermeneutics, University of Stellenbosch, 1987. Pp. iv + 30.

A small ray of hope in a dark tunnel is better than no light at all. Although change must come in South Africa, no significant change is likely to be offered by the present government, nor is it likely that sanctions or bombs will force change in the short or medium term.

But one or two tiny rays. The struggle in South Africa is essentially one of two nationalisms. It is the opinions of Afrikaners and of Blacks that matter; liberal English views have little effect on (or welcome from) either side. As many Afrikaans people become more urbanized and more middle class, they become less willing to pay the cost of maintaining the apartheid state. A spirit of mild reformism has been in the air for some time, even in government circles. But with that distant prospect, how can the security of the white minority be protected? More important, how can Afrikaner cultural, national and linguistic identity, won at such cost from British imperialism, be maintained? Answer: A Bill of Rights! Influential organizations of Afrikaans intelligentsia have been hinting at this for some time; unthinkable when one occupies the seat of power, but more desirable if the seat is to be shared. Cynically, one might suspect that the newly discovered concern for the rights of minorities is not entirely altruistic. Nevertheless, a small ray of hope.

Another ray: in the past Afrikaner unity could best be described as monolithic, in contrast to the divided loyalties of black people. In recent years even the gentle reformism hinted at above has been enough to divide Afrikanerdom in half. Within the heart of the Afrikaans churches and universities – far more influential and respected than in an English community – even more radical voices are to be heard. First a tiny trickle of brave churchmen – Geyser, Naude, Engelbrecht – now quite a strong river of voices in Afrikaans academic and church circles protesting apartheid.

Herein lies the significance of this booklet. It is a very slight document, its ideas hardly new or revolutionary. In a nutshell, it argues that apartheid is not only economically unworkable but theologically/morally wrong. It is theologically wrong because all are created equal by God and because God commands us to love our neighbour and our enemy. Human diversity is a reason not for separation but for co-operation to our mutual enhancement. Human sinfulness will make that difficult; we will be tempted to ignore those who are marginalized. Therefore we need a participative democracy with an entrenched Bill of Rights, *not* for the protection of a separate identity but to ensure that the powerless poor are enabled to live in freedom and responsibility before God.

Its significance lies not in its views but in its authorship and origins. The authors are all Afrikaans churchmen; the publishers (even though there is a cautious disclaimer of necessary university approval) are the Department of Biblical Studies in the prestigious

Afrikaans University of Stellenbosch. If enough Afrikaans Christians come to share these views, apartheid will end. They alone have the power to end it. Almost all Afrikaans people are Christian, most of them regularly practising members of one of the Reformed Churches. They are a people with a profoundly sincere Christian conscience; and this is quite a respectable ray of hope.

The authors are not exactly representative of typical Dutch Reformed thinking yet. Kinghorn has previously published some radical criticisms of historical church support for apartheid. Lategan's wife stood as an independent candidate against the Nationalist party in the last election. But their influence, and that of those like them, is growing. Johann Heyns, present moderator of the largest of the Dutch Reformed Churches, almost certainly shares their views in secret, though he might not carry his Synod with him.

It would seem ungracious to raise objections from a less faithful point of view. I agree with the draft Bill of Rights in the appendix; I agree that Christianity can easily be interpreted to support these views. I am also, unhappily, aware that Christianity was easily made to appear compatible with apartheid; with the need to separate races because fallen humans are sinful and cannot be trusted to love each other; Christian belief fired the sense of purpose and hope in resurgent Afrikaans Christian Nationalism. Dr Malan, Dr Verwoerd, Lategan, Kinghorn et al – and also Archbishop Tutu and Dr Boesak – are all able to claim, with logic, sincerity, and reasonable exegetical consistency, that Christianity is on their side, that they are God's agents. Perhaps that raises questions about the propriety of claiming scriptural and divine sanction for whatever we regard as the most sensible and equitable political solution?

Ronald Nicolson

William Temple and Christian Social Ethics Today

Alan M. Suggate. T.&T. Clark, 1987. Pp. xvii + 286. £14.95 (hb)

The question bound to confront the reader of Alan Suggate's book is, precisely what intellectual purpose is it supposed to serve? In part, it is an intellectual biography of William Temple and a very thorough, concise and judicious one. But the story has been told before, and quite clearly Suggate does not see his new telling as a task sufficient in itself. As the title indicates, he tries to interweave into his account reflections on current Christian social ethics; thus the bulk of the book is interspersed with comments on Temple's ideas deriving from the thought of recent writers, and in the final section Suggate briefly enunciates his own standpoint, integrating Temple's best insights with those of Reinhold Niebuhr and some recent German Catholic and Lutheran writers (the book is useful as a source of information on thinkers not very well known in this country).

Presumably Suggate's real aim is to discuss the continuing relevance of the Anglican social tradition, if

one can speak of such a thing in the singular. This is more than timely, yet one has to ask, why focus on Temple? Although very influential, he was not a great social thinker, and did not creatively develop the tradition in the fashion of a Tawney, or a Demant. The intellectual treatment which Temple demands is surely one which takes the deeds and the writings together, and considers both primarily in their historical context. By contrast, Suggate too often avails himself of the judgment of historical hindsight, and is mainly concerned to fit Temple's story into a wider narrative about how the over-optimistic illusions of 19th century idealism are gradually left behind, and a more sober realism triumphs in Christian social thought.

There are two aspects to this "realism". Sin gets taken more seriously, so that the theological focus shifts from incarnation to redemption, while at the same time, moral reflection adopts a more empirical procedure which respects the resistance of social actuality to ideal aspirations. Suggate seeks to persuade us, in the wake of many other commentators, that these are the vital polarities in Christian social and political theology. However, the secret *rationale* behind choosing Temple as the lynch-pin for one's tentative musings is that one thereby personifies, but conveniently fails to identify in conceptual terms, an underlying factor of continuity which transcends these polarities. This factor is the perspective of establishment, of Church-state alliance, which encourages the idea that Christianity and humanism contribute ideals, maxims and principles, while the state is preoccupied with the merely pragmatic problems of putting them into effect. This, surely, is the key to what Suggate so rightly identifies as Temple's "comfortable fit" of Plato, utilitarianism and Christianity" (222). The "comfortable fit" indeed characterized much incarnationalism, but it *equally* characterizes Temple's later redemptivism, Niebuhr's realism, and Suggate's own outlook. In all these cases the notion persists that what theology contributes is a set of general principles, perhaps mediated by "middle axioms", which have to be modified in relation to an empirical investigation of "the facts".

Two things are wrong with this. First of all, Christian morality is not exemplified only in general ideas, but also in the concrete way of life of the ecclesial community, so that it is already about a real, factual possibility, and not just the vague desirability of certain aspirations. Secondly, the "experience" which Suggate so often invokes, is essentially experience of the conditions of a life coded under a various set of secular, often non-Christian assumptions. All we get to know here are the codes themselves, and the spontaneous modifications of these codes, but never the real, never more about "humanity", or life itself. Of course we have to reckon with these codes, but they cannot have any right to modify dialectically our own "code of conduct", our own Christian sense of social virtue and social purpose. This code itself develops, and it may indeed learn from elsewhere, but any modification has necessarily to be justified as emanating in accordance with its own peculiar and evolving logic. It does not intrinsically require an alien pole of "experience", but is, in itself, just a different experience. For there are no dialectical relationships between ideas and practices – this is pure metaphysics, the persisting Hegelianism of even Suggate – only differences

between practices which themselves construct ideas.

Temple, Niebuhr and Suggate all combine a Kantian exaltation of disembodied norms as starting points, with a quasi-utilitarian attitude to their implementation. Given the indeterminism inherent to the norms, this usually means that the prevailing worldly wisdom of political economy, state bureaucracy and total policing will be given the Christian stamp of approval. And in the last analysis, what Suggate is really celebrating is an assumed teleological drift towards the post-war social democratic consensus. Capitalist economic relations are seen as a simple empirical fact, the truth about human behaviour at last revealed, but it is thought that they can be tempered by the application of certain welfare measures. Yet now that this consensus has broken down, one ought to be able to see also the contingency of the "Platonic-utilitarian" ideology which was an ingredient within it. And once this is grasped, one might go on to suggest that in certain respects the trajectory traced by Suggate is really something of a retreat.

For within the British Hegelianism which was Temple's inheritance there was, despite an unwarranted logicizing of the real, and despite the unhegelian neo-Kantianism actually still going strong in Suggate, at least some recognition of the historical occasionality of ideals. This was superior to the ahistorical absolutizing of "the personal" which Suggate advocates as part of a new natural law; personalism is a contentless norm because freedom, society and participation can be claimed as occurring universally and everywhere, just like their opposites. What else could possibly be going on? Only the specification of social goals, desirable virtues, necessary hierarchies, distribution of roles, power and property, gives the context for discriminating between freedom and unfreedom, true friendship from false, the presence from the absence of participation.

Again, while Suggate is right to imply that the occasion for the incarnation is redemption, not the fulfilment of an eternal logical necessity, the writings of Forsyth and Barth at their worst tend to prove that if the fact of redemption is given priority over the incarnation it will become a purely extrinsic fact, without a recognizable shape or form that can make a difference to our social world. It becomes a matter of "we are redeemed by God, not ourselves, so therefore..., therefore *anything*", instead of "here among the body of Christians is the redeemed life, what circumstances are compatible with its flourishing and extension"? In the period when he was still influenced by incarnationalism, and to some extent Thomism, Temple found many modern economic practices to be not thus compatible. Surely this was not, as Suggate suggests, just because he was naïve about economics (though no doubt he was), but also because he recognized that both modern economic practice and modern economic thought concern a person not recognizable by the Church as one made and remade in the image of God?

So Suggate gives us the story of a transition: incarnation to redemption, idealism to empiricism; but he conceals the persisting factor, namely establishment Platonism/utilitarianism, and fails to see that, if anything, the transition confirms the persistence all the

more, and even overrides elements in idealism that do justice to historical occurrence and Christian particularity. Consistent with this, he declares his preference for a Neo-Lutheran approach concentrating on natural rights as a pure aspect of law and secularity, over Barth's later Neo-Calvinism which sees secular matters of justice as belonging to, and determinable in the light of, a single process of redemption (142-144). Many other voices speak in his book, but rarely, or only mutedly, voices of true Christian socialists, or of those critical of the liberal consensus: not Figgis, Gill, Sturzo, Macmurray, Mounier, Maritain, Demant, Macintyre, Grant, Yoder or Hauerwas. Suggate exhibits a systematic preference for the bland, which may have seemed like good sense in the 1950's or 60's when the Platonic/utilitarian balance appeared secure: what we now know is that when it suits itself, secular liberalism will follow its own logic with a remorselessness that allows no possible purchase in the public arena for principles or axioms, middle, middling or otherwise. Some of us, however, exotics to the end, are still trying to live elsewhere.

John Milbank

Evelyn Underhill: Modern Guide to the Ancient Quest for the Holy

Dana Greene, ed. State University of New York Press, 1988. Pp. x + 260. \$10.95

Evelyn Underhill became prominent for her book *Mysticism*, first published in 1911; and although she wrote other major books and several hundred articles, she is still remembered chiefly for this early work. This is a pity, for although it was and continues to be a significant book, it was written from a perspective which underwent major modifications later in her career. One of the strengths of Dana Greene's collection of Underhill's essays is that she arranges them chronologically, so that it is possible to trace the movement in Underhill's thought. Greene also supplies an introductory essay and a comprehensive bibliography of works by and about Underhill.

I should like to mention three related aspects of the shift in Underhill's perception as illustrated by the essays in this collection. First is the movement from seeing mysticism as essentially about the subjective psychological state of the individual to a position which stresses the objective reality of union with God, whatever one's state of consciousness. Her early essay, "A Defence of Magic", is dependent for its argument on the assumptions that mysticism consists of esoteric states, that such states can be procured by all sorts of methods ranging from breathing techniques to correct participation in the liturgy of the Mass, and that it is the centre of all true religion and the quest of the magician. By contrast, her later essay on "Prayer" shows how by the time she wrote it she did not place ecstasy or indeed any psychological state at the centre, but rather trusting openness to God, whatever our feelings or state of consciousness. The practice of prayer requires discipline, and one can learn to do it better, but the criterion for praying well is not the achievement of unusual feelings but rather that it teaches us "to love, to suffer, and to work" (p. 142).

Such love, work, and suffering are modelled in this essay and in subsequent ones firmly on the life of Christ. This emphasis on the Incarnation marks the second major shift in Underhill's thinking. In her early work, for example in "Bergson and the Mystics", her outlook is strongly Neoplatonic. While this strand never disappeared altogether from her writing, it was heavily qualified in her later thinking by recognition of the Word made flesh. Once the Incarnation is seen to be crucial, faith and love and a centeredness on Jesus replace the abnormal consciousness with which she at first characterized mystics (p. 49), and in ontology her early Idealism makes way for Critical Realism.

Closely linked with these changes is her move from focussing on monistic union or ontological merging with the Absolute as the *desideratum*, to the much simpler and far more demanding task of working with the love of Christ for social justice. Although Underhill was never deaf to injustice, she did sometimes write dismissively of "busy social reformers" (p. 73); the extent of her change of perspective can be seen from her essay "Father Wainright" in which the spirituality of this priest is seen precisely in the social changes which his sanctity effected in the Dockland slums at the turn of the century.

Underlying these major shifts of perspective, and, in my view, enabling them, are some basic continuities. Throughout her life, Underhill believed that love and knowledge are inseparably linked. Her quest for knowledge of God and of truth was never disengaged. She thought with passion, with *love* of truth. This made her meticulous in her research and honest in her thinking; it also made her work a service of love, not an academic exercise. Secondly, her commitment to the link between love and truth led her to careful investigation of medieval Christian mystics in whom that linkage was lived out. Her acquaintance with primary source material was phenomenal, and her writings are greatly enriched by liberal quotation. I suggest, however, that their value to her was far more than illustrative; rather, it was through steady attention to actual mystics of the Christian tradition that she won through from her early Platonizing and psychologizing approach to mysticism (which was the received philosophical view of the time) to a thoroughly Incarnational stance.

Dana Green is mistaken, it seems to me, when she says in her Introduction that Underhill made *two* contributions, "one to an understanding of mysticism and the other to an understanding of the spiritual life" (p. 24). If I read these essays correctly, the truth is rather that through committed engagement with the writings of actual mystics, Underhill's *definition* of mysticism changed from something that philosophers called by that name to a life permeated and invigorated by the mystery of God in the Spirit of Christ. And that is what makes these essays important.

Grace M. Jantzen

Melchior Hoffman. Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation

Klaus Deppermann. Translated by Malcolm Wren, edited by Benjamin Drewery. T.&T. Clark, 1987. Pp. 432. £29.95 (hb)

Klaus Deppermann's excellent study of the radical Anabaptist furrier Melchior Hoffman was first published in German in 1979, and is now made available to an English-reading audience. Deppermann offers more than a mere biography of this fascinating figure, but also relates Hoffman to his social and political context and discusses the various groups of his followers. Hoffman's varied career is carefully analysed in all its phases, from his early preaching in Livonia, Stockholm, Schleswig-Holstein and East Friesland through to his imprisonment and death in Strasbourg. Deppermann provides a detailed analysis of Hoffman's complex theology, difficult to pin down because of its contrasts, near-contradictions and fertile derivation from many sources. The skill and value of this analysis become fully clear as he shows how Hoffman's followers could strike out in different directions as they emphasised one aspect or another of their mentor's thought, producing both peaceful and militant Melchiorites, who then split further into at least four distinct groupings. However, Deppermann's analysis goes well beyond a traditional church historical view of his subject by paying careful attention to the interaction of religious ideas and the social and political context in which they unfolded. His masterly discussion of Strasbourg's treatment of non-conformity is exemplary in this regard, showing how social and political pressures gradually led to a policy of tolerance being supplanted by one of enforced uniformity based on a modified Lutheranism, anticipating the arguments in Lorna Jane Abray, *The People's Reformation* (1985). The book is also a notable contribution to the study of 16th century chiliasm, although it lacks a systematic analysis of the phenomenon which would enable the reader to situate Hoffman in a wider context, and is uncertain on the origins of Hoffman's apocalyptic outlook. These are minor weaknesses in an excellent study which shows how effectively biography, social history and theology can work together. Works such as this will do much to cast light on the most neglected aspect of Reformation history, the "lost causes" of those radical reformers denied the attention devoted to the figures such as Luther or Calvin.

R. W. Scribner

The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind. The Case of Edward Carnell

Rudolph Nelson. CUP, 1987. Pp. xiii + 252. £27.50 (hb)

In April 1967, Edward Carnell, a prominent evangelical theologian, and former president of Fuller Seminary, was found dead of an overdose in a Californian hotel room. Some Fundamentalists, seeing Carnell as a liberalizing traitor within the evangelical camp, regarded his death as a fitting nemesis; others, like Rudolph

Nelson, who stood on evangelicalism's most liberal wing, and had suffered similar fundamentalist attacks, felt a strong sympathy for Carnell. In later years, Nelson moved out of the church altogether, becoming a freewheeling religious individualist. But he remained fascinated by Carnell and his fate. He felt sure that there was a story to be told, and that he was the man to tell it. The result is an absorbing and thought-provoking book. It may cause some frustration to the relatively few readers who come to it already having a keen interest in Carnell: this is a biography of the kind which tells us at least as much about the author as the subject. But the many readers who will come to the book knowing little or nothing about Carnell himself, but drawn by a more general interest in American evangelicalism and in some of the issues raised by his life, may enjoy, or at least appreciate, Nelson's account at several different levels. First there is the human drama and tragedy of the story, including the final mystery (was it suicide or was it accidental death?). Second, the book provides a fascinating account of the rise and decline of an academic career: the talented student who fell under the spell of his Philosophy professor, who published a prize-winning book before completing his PhD – and who worked a horrifying 35 hours a week in a restaurant while also pursuing full-time study; the "master pedagogue" lecturing to capacity audiences, but increasingly bogged down in administrative tasks for which he had no great talent; the brash rebel against puritanism, who liked holding forth to his ethics class on the delights of masturbation; the ultimately disappointed author, whose potboilers sold like hot cakes, but whose master-work was a flop; in his last years, increasing dependence on his psychotherapist and on various drugs, and the emergence of a Carnell who was in some ways more likable, but had lost much of his panache. Third, and this seems ultimately to be the book's main purpose, it is a polemic against the form of Christianity of which Carnell was a leading exponent.

Carnell first made his name as a writer on apologetics, and this remained the branch of Christian thought which most interested him. He aspired to devise an apologetic that would remain strictly orthodox, while winning the respect of the educated public, and avoiding the stigma of "fundamentalism". According to Nelson, he ended by getting the worst of both worlds. He alienated conservative Protestants by his ecumenical tendencies, his concessions to biblical criticism, and his assaults on puritanism. On the other hand, his position on such issues as evolution and biblical inspiration seemed to outsiders little different from that of the fundamentalists whom Carnell so much despised. Moreover, even in his later, more ecumenically-minded phase, he was temperamentally unsuited to dialogue with those of other persuasions; his aversion to nuance and paradox, and his insistence that every problem had a single "correct" solution was especially unattractive to liberal and neo-orthodox Protestants. Typical was Carnell's encounter with Karl Barth in 1962: while Barth's dislike for plain "Yes" or "No" answers to Carnell's questions led the latter, with characteristic bluntness, to accuse him of "weasel-words", Carnell in turn was being denounced by fundamentalists for making too many concessions to Barth's view of the Bible.

Though Nelson's analysis of Carnell's own weaknesses seems to me convincing, I am not persuaded that it is justifiable to treat these weaknesses as characteristic of conservative evangelicalism in general – still less, that Nelson is right to treat conservative evangelicalism as an anachronism. Since the book does not provide detailed consideration of any conservative evangelical other than Carnell himself, it is impossible to judge from the evidence adduced here in what sense, if any, Carnell was a representative figure. Nelson's claim that Carnell's religious approach was an anachronistic survival of 19th century common-sense rationalism seems to me to under-estimate the influence this kind of thinking has in the contemporary world. In this respect a more sociological approach might offer different conclusions from the literary-philosophical approach favoured by Nelson. Certainly, in terms of sheer numbers, evangelicalism would seem to have a wider appeal to contemporary Americans than the experience-oriented liberalism favoured by Nelson; and even though evangelicals are in a minority, the evangelical sub-culture must rank as one of the largest, the best organized, and the best protected against outside attack of the many sub-cultures in American society. Nelson would no doubt point out that Carnell's rationalism, his liking for common sense reasoning, his aversion to paradox, and his preference for simple dichotomies between "true" and "false", all ran counter to some of the most important trends in western literature, philosophy and theology. Yet Carnell's "19th century rationalism" remains remarkably widespread in many more influential branches of contemporary knowledge. For instance, while few biologists and psychologists appear to share the religious concerns of Carnell or Nelson, their general intellectual approach would seem in most other respects closer to the former than the latter. The continuing strength of conservative evangelicalism may arise not only, as Nelson seems to imply, from its ability to enclose itself within a sealed-off world, but from the fact that its ethos and modes of thinking are in certain respects so contemporary.

Hugh McLeod

The Myth of Christian Uniqueness

John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (eds.). SCM, 1987. Pp. xii + 227. £8.50

The provocative title is qualified at the outset and the problems of modern theology in facing other religions and revelations emerge gradually and forcibly. "Myth" does not imply falsehood but it needs to be understood in context. Christianity is admittedly unique in the sense that every religion is, but questions of its superiority or finality are raised again and again. The veteran Wilfred Cantwell Smith remarks that it is one thing to condemn some religions as idolatrous but "for Christians to think that Christianity is true, or final, or salvific, is a form of idolatry", giving to an organization the honour that is due only to God.

In recent writings, notably those of Paul Knitter, three Christian attitudes have been distinguished: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism, and they are

discussed at length here and from several angles. There was general Exclusivism in the past, all other religions being considered wrong and their followers doomed to damnation. Langdon Gilkey finds that a stand must still be taken against fundamentalist intolerance, whether of Ayatollah Khomeini or of the Moral Majority which seeks to impose a theocracy on "Christian America". And John Hick shows that while Vatican II gave grudging recognition of what is "true and holy in these religions", it insisted at the same time that "all must be converted" and "all must be incorporated into the Church".

Inclusivism seeks to bring all religions into relationship with the others as partial revelations or ways leading up to Christianity, or Christ, as *The Crown of Hinduism*, as a famous missionary book once expressed it. But Marjorie Suchocki criticizes even Hans Küng, in *On Being a Christian*, for singling out negative characteristics in other religions but not applying this judgement to Christianity. Thus criticizing "their actual remoteness from their original positions", veneration of saints, use of amulets, icons, holy war, and general syncretism, can only lead to a "cheap feeling of superiority". More cautiously Raimundo Panikkar sees the Jordan, Tiber and Ganges not coalescing but being transformed into Spirit, like a cloud returning in rain to enrich the earth in new ways.

Most of these 12 writers give different expressions of Pluralism, recognizing that religions exist side by side, each with its own culture and offer of salvation, though Panikkar would prefer to call it Plurality which need not imply either equality or mixture of disparate elements.

Christian claims to universalism are linked by several writers with the triumphalism and imperialism which have been decried in recent years, though much remains. John Hick attacks assumptions of Christian superiority, first against Judaism and then above other races, black, brown and yellow, whose religions and cultures have been regarded as inferior to those of the West and due to be superseded. Rosemary Reuther and Marjorie Suchocki continue the onslaught from feminist perspectives against the patriarchal attitudes of the monotheistic religions, though not only there. Reuther declares that "the idea that Christianity, or even the biblical faiths, have a monopoly on religious truth is an outrageous and absurd religious chauvinism", for the divine is to be found in all religions and "God/ess is the ground of all beings".

But if Christianity is not unique is Christ, and in what way? Cantwell Smith says that the figure of Christ may have been "an idol through the centuries", transcendent but not mundane, or mundane and not transcendent. Stanley Samartha from an Indian perspective criticizes the World Council of Churches' statement that "Jesus is God" as unbiblical and tribal "over against the gods of other peoples". Aloysius Pieris considers the Buddha and the Christ as mediators of liberation, expressing knowledge and love in complementary ways, but there has been an obsession with "uniqueness" which led into blind alleys. Seiichi Yagi discusses "I" in the words of Jesus, the reign of God "or the son of man" speaking through him, and the risen Christ being "oneness of the divine and human at the depth of every human being".

Christianity is the largest and most universal of the religions, but it is in an overall minority and it is aware of other religions more than at any time in history. There are many questions for faith and mission, the latter hardly discussed here. If the full answers do not appear in this generation, at least the problems should be faced.

Geoffrey Parrinder

The Dialogical Imperative. A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter

David Lochhead. SCM, 1988. Pp. vii + 104. £5.50

David Lochhead's reflections on interfaith dialogue are welcome for two main reasons. Firstly, he brings a well-simmered and slightly souped-up combination of a Barthian-Wittgensteinian perspective to a topic that has often suffered from the neglect of such seasoning. His position is not dissimilar to that of George Lindbeck, neither is his style: sharp, succinct and sometimes almost too lean. Secondly, he interestingly investigates interreligious attitudes in terms of "ideological analysis" (3). He shows how theological positions can emerge often (although not exclusively) from the social situations in which religions find themselves.

Lochhead begins mapping various ideological stances towards other religions. His typology covers "isolationism" (the other as entirely ignorant), "hostility" (the other as wilfully erroneous), "competition" (the other as a genuine but inferior and deficient competitor), and the increasingly popular ideology of "partnership" (extended from Christian ecumenism, where the other is seen as an equal, holding common truths). Each stance is carefully related to ideological considerations present in the culture. For example, secularization, with its privatization of religion, often provides the conditions for isolationism. (It is remarkable that Lochhead never properly defines "ideological analysis". Neither does he apply ideological analysis to his own proposals.) His useful typology illuminates the complexity of the debate and undermines simple labelling.

What is Lochhead's alternative to these ideological stances? He stresses both *faithfulness* to one's own tradition and, in this faithfulness, discovers the basis for a genuine *openness* to the other. Barth is his mentor here. Lochhead rightly reads Barth's essay "The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion" (*Church Dogmatics*, I/2) as a discussion on the nature of revelation and theological method, not as a negative criticism of non-Christian religions. He also shows that Barth allows for the voice of God in the secular world (*CD IV/3*, First Half), though the criterion for the discernment of this is profoundly Christocentric. Faithfulness to Christ does not require an a priori negative judgement upon the world religions but points to the sole norm and starting point for discerning truth: Jesus Christ. Lochhead further supports this view from an analysis of the Bible. He argues that the Bible "provides no warrant for an a priori valuation of other traditions" (44), except for a positive valuation of Judaism. Rightly he takes seriously the condemnation of idolatry but is acutely aware of the hermeneutical

problems surrounding its identification. Without a careful process of listening and learning (dialogue), the other is inevitably misunderstood, caricatured and marginalized. Buber's thoughts on dialogue come to the fore at this point of the book.

It is from this perspective that Lochhead criticizes the approaches outlined earlier. Each in their own way carries an a priori definition of the other, before the other is allowed self-definition. In the "competition" model, for example, the other is deemed to hold just so much of the truth but not quite the whole truth. Similarly, the "partnership" model assumes a common ground: God – which unnecessarily excludes non-theists such as Buddhists. Lochhead proposes that we view dialogue in terms of differing "language games", where no understanding of the other is possible without "bilinguality". Hence, there can be no a priori assessments or requirements of the dialogue partner. Lochhead acknowledges some qualifications. However, his stipulation about dialogue partners are problematic. Groups that display a paranoid or pathological mentality and are not "genuinely in touch with reality" (75) are to be avoided. This could easily result in isolationism and assumes a fair deal of prejudgment. Following his understanding of language games, Lochhead then appropriately stresses dialogue as *activity*, not just talking, but working together for peace and justice.

Dialogue is viewed as a Christian imperative, rooted in the injunction to love one's neighbour. This is a most important insight. Lochhead also argues (rightly I believe) that dialogue cannot be separated from mission, when it is understood primarily as witness and witness is the telling and living of narratives that shape our lives. If mission is conceived as stepping outside of a dialogical relationship it is rendered ineffective, thus becoming a monologue. It is a shame that Lochhead leaves his suggestions about story and narrative so underdeveloped as also with his final comments on the two nature doctrine of Chalcedon. At the heart of a high Christology, so he suggests, is a dialogical relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ, thereby calling the Church into "the same intimate dialogue with the world that is represented by the divine-human dialogue in Jesus" (97). That Lochhead ends on this note is odd. Firstly, because the strength and plausibility of his position demands a more developed Christology – despite the fact that he rightly points to non-theological factors as shaping our perceptions. Secondly, his Barthian premises dictate that he start the book with Christology and then show, through an ideological critique, the problems with alternative stances. Thirdly, there is strangely little mention of the Trinity which would offer a most helpful grounding to relationality and dialogue as the heart of the Christian life. To end on a questioning note, however, is to praise the book in as much as it raises some profound questions (and is thereby dialogical!) and makes some insightful and far-reaching suggestions.

Gavin D'Costa

Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism

Frank J. Hoffman. Motilal Banarsidass, 1987. Pp. xii + 126.

The title of this short book is slightly misleading. In effect the book discusses a number of miscellaneous points arising from a contemporary philosophical reading of certain portions of the Pali Nikāyas. Hoffman states (p. 7) that there have been few works written on Pali Buddhism by scholars with philosophical training, and places his own work at “the interface between the philosophy of religion and Buddhology”.

Chapter 1 states Hoffman’s methodological premises: we can define early Buddhism in terms of the five Nakāyas (in practice Hoffman largely ignores the fifth); we can and need to try to make sense of these in isolation from the later Buddhist tradition; in doing so, philosophical reflection is a legitimate tool to wield. Accordingly Chapter 2 considers the charge that Nikāya thinking is “logically flawed” since the third lemma of the classic “four-fold logic” flouts the principle of contradiction. Hoffman throws out the charge. His restatement of the third lemma (“there exists an *x* such that both *y* and *z* apply in part”) is helpful; but while he shows how the third lemma can be logically intelligible, the Nikāyas’ rejection of all four lemmas might still appear to some as logically unintelligible, being an infringement of the law of excluded middle. In the next chapter Hoffman goes on to deal with the view that, on account of its teaching that all is “suffering” (*dukkha*), Buddhism must be seen as a species of pessimism. In what is the most successful section of this book, Hoffman exposes the distorted nature of such a view by considering the Nikāya use of the term *dukkha* and examining the notion of “pessimism”. Chapter 4 looks at some of the terminology the Nikāyas employ to discuss “mind” (viz. *mano*, *citta* and *viññāṇa*), and then turns to the problem of personal identity in the light of the teaching of “no-self” (*anattā*). Hoffman sums up the Nikāya position as “continuity without identity” (p. 53). But how is this conceived of as operating across lives? Not in terms of memory, bodily continuity or self-awareness. In fact, according to Hoffman, the texts fail to provide “conditions for the meaning of ‘the same person’ applied to a being reborn” (p. 76). Here an in-depth study of the understanding of “dependent origination” might have proved interesting. Hoffman turns instead in Chapter 5 to questions of epistemology and verification. He argues that Jayatilleke in particular has underplayed the “affective” content of the Buddhist conception of “faith” (*saddhā*); thus “faith” is not to be seen primarily as involving a set of “propositional beliefs”. Hoffman is surely right. Less happy is his treatment of “higher knowledge” (*abhiññā*). His warning against understanding Buddhism as a kind of empiricism is pertinent, but by focusing on the general categories of “religious belief” and “religious experience” he fails to give a convincing account of the nature of *abhiññā*. Finally, Hoffman discusses three terms, viz. “the deathless” (*amata*), *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna*, and maintains the distinction between *nibbāna* as an attainment reached during one’s lifetime, and *pari-nibbāna* as the subsequent attainment reached at death. He goes on to discuss why “neither the transcendental state view nor the extinction

view” (p. 105) of *parinibbāna* is in keeping with Buddhism.

These are all perennial problems of Buddhist studies. Hoffman continually raises interesting questions and consistently makes good points, but he fails to provide a really searching account of any one of the topics he discusses. This follows in part from his premise that the Nikāyas are to be investigated apart from the later tradition. The issue is practical and not one of theoretical principle. We are removed from the Nikāyas by over two millennia; the Abhidhamma by only a century or so; the commentaries by, say, a further six centuries. In trying to make sense of the Nikāyas we need all the help we can get, and certainly the help of the “sense” the subsequent tradition made of the same texts. (This does not imply slavishly following the tradition.)

In places Hoffman appears to leave important considerations out of account. On the question of whether or not early Buddhism countenanced the possibility of disembodied consciousness, he comments (p. 65) “[f]orm, feeling, sensation, disposition and consciousness are together said to constitute the person, and there is no talk of some of those being more basic in the sense of being able to exist without the other”. But what of the formless (*arūpa*) realms? Here beings precisely exist in a state of disembodied consciousness: the four “mental” aggregates exist without the support of “form”. This is explicit in the Abhidhamma (*Vibhaṅga* 407) but hardly an innovation (cf. *Majjhima-nikāya* I 436). Hoffman is also prone to error when commenting on matters relating to the later tradition: the notion of “death-consciousness” (*cuti-citta*) is not Sarvāstivādin but Theravādin (p. 64). Nor is he entirely happy handling basic philosophical matters. What precisely does he mean by describing *sacchikaraṇīyo* as an “emphatic *yo* form” (p. 94)? Pali *sacchikaroti* derives from Sanskrit *sākṣin* (“with one’s own eyes”) and means literally “to experience with one’s own eyes”. Hoffman, relating it to Pali *sacca* (“truth”), thinks he can take it to mean literally “to establish as true” (p. 94).

That Hoffman should please both philosophers and Buddhist scholars all of the time would be too much to expect. His reflections are both stimulating and useful, but in so far as this book lacks the perspective of a systematic and comprehensive enquiry based on the Pali sources, they must be regarded as suggestive rather than definitive.

R. M. L. Gethin

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- David Aune. *The New Testament and its Literary Environment*. James Clark. Pp. 260. £12.95 (hb)
- Paul Avis. *Gore: Construction and Conflict*. Churchman Publishing Limited. Pp. 123. £10.95 (hb)
- Paul Avis. (ed.) *The Threshold of Theology*. Marshall Pickering. Pp. vii + 182. £12.95
- John Barclay. *Obeying the Truth. A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*. T.&T. Clark. Pp. xv + 298. £16.95 (hb)
- Margaret Barker. *The Lost Prophet. The Book of Enoch and its influence on Christianity*. SPCK. Pp. xi + 116. £4.95
- John Barton. *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity*. SPCK. Pp. xi + 96. £4.95
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