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Book Reviews

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow : Time and History in the Old Testament : by Simon J. DeVries. S.P.C.K., London, 1976. Pp. 389. Price £6.50.

This is an important study of the Hebraic vocabulary of time as a tool for further understanding and is intended for specialists and experts. This is the first systematic study of its kind from the standpoint of the Old Testament.

In the first chapter Dr. DeVries makes a comprehensive analysis of the 'Day' as an essential clue to the Hebrew understanding of time. In the following chapters the investigations fall into three parts corresponding to the three divisions of time—past, present and future. The author spares no time in it to examine the historical genres, various types of discourses and the prophetic and apocalyptic views on time. *Yom* is taken as the unit of time (p. 51). It is regarded as a unit of experience. The primary concern of the Hebrew is describing and witnessing to an experience of time.

Here history is seen from the point of view of time. Without the mind and heart of man—brought to expression in the interpretative word—history is nothing but a chain of occurrences, aimless, void and futile (p. 53). History is important because the 'Day' has its significance. The 'Day', especially 'that Day', is explained as an epitome, that is, 'a summarising characterisation concerning a particular day in which Israel's God was in some way seen to be active in crucial confrontation with His people' (p. 136). History contains 'Days' which are a succession of opportunities. These opportunities make men aware of an ever present responsibility to respond to the new crisis of God's address (cf. pp. 349ff.). Although in the concept of 'the Day' the author comes very close to the Indian idea of 'pan-sacrality', he makes out the distinguishing mark of the Hebrew concept of time. For the Hebrew, *hayyom* is a day of crucial decision (p. 252). The deferred 'today' is 'tomorrow'. In it we find a fairly equal distribution of judgement and salvation pericopes (pp. 329 ff.).

The book is neither—in an exclusive sense—a philological study nor a theological-phenomenological analysis nor a critical-exegetical examination. But the author has a word for the philologists. They must give up the effort to determine word meanings without a com-

prehensive study of the function of the word within a specific, forma schema, within the ongoing stream of tradition-history and within particular literary contexts (p. 336).

According to the author, Israel's historiography is not 'anti-quarian'. The past is referred to as 'that Day', is related to 'this Day', and it refers to the future in relation to the responsible action in the here and now. Both historiography and eschatology are forms of parenthesis, holding the covenant people to an ever present choice between 'life and good, death and evil' (Deut. 30:15). 'That Day', past or future, has no other function but to illuminate 'today' (p. 340).

There are two approaches, according to the author, to the concept of time in the Old Testament, namely, the quantitative and the qualitative approaches. The first approach provides the framework of continuity and the second gives the revelatory significance. The apocalyptic understanding makes 'today' meaningless. Since time has more revelatory significance than place, the traditional fervour of Christian pilgrims for 'holy places' is to be understood as a paganzing distortion of biblical religion.

The study has repercussions on the nature of Christian worship. The essence of sacramentalism seems to be the reduction of the 'timely' to the 'timeless'. By this the 'historically' is converted to the realm of 'myth or cult'. The quantitative approach to time holds sacraments central, while the qualitative approach makes parenthesis central. Dr. DeVries suggests that the Church must hold the parenthesis in the centre, keeping the sacramental memorialisation strictly instrumental (cf. p. 349). But there is no need for a difference of emphasis. Both are important and one must see that the one emphasis should not engulf or overshadow the other.

The important gain of this study is an insight into the several functions of the time-designatives and interrelationships between the functions. In the final chapter the author explains 'the texture and quality of time in the Old Testament tradition'. This is the result of his investigations. It is through this chapter that the layman is given permission to enjoy the fruits of the author's work. The tabular lists given in the book are an additional help for study.

The book, undoubtedly, is an asset to all theological libraries and can be used as a source book for the scholars. A very useful glossary, subject indexes and scripture references are added towards the last pages of the book.

K. V. MATHEW

*Mar Thoma Theological Seminary,
Kottayam.*

Handbook to the Old Testament : by Claus Westermann. S.P.C.K., London, 1975. Pp. 285. Price £2.50.

Many books have been written by Claus Westermann in the field of Old Testament. Every one of them bears the mark of sound scholarship, thoroughness and clarity of thought. The book under review is no exception. It adds another feather to his academic excellence.

The book begins with an introduction followed by four main parts. The main parts are subdivided into twenty-two sub-sections. A special feature of the book is that it contains twenty-three charts inserted at intervals. A time chart of significant dates in the history of Israel is also included at the beginning of the book. These charts are the real sign posts which guide the readers into the inside of each book of the Old Testament.

Those who are sincerely concerned with the study of the Bible need a basic knowledge of the content of the different books, without which theological study and subsequent Christian ministry through the Church is not possible. 'This book is intended for all who are convinced that a survey of the entire Bible is a necessary prerequisite for a responsible transmission of the words of Scripture in preaching, teaching and the practical ministry,' says the author.

Therefore, the book is a timely boon to the Christian Church and especially to the students of the Bible who struggle to make out 'what is what' in it. Prof. Westermann opens a simple and clear pathway to the Scripture, through this book, persuading the reader to find his own way. As the reader enters into it he could hear the message of the biblical writers and feel the characteristics of their literary style. As far as the literary characteristics of the books are concerned, the reader is not able to escape the strong Westermannian emphasis on 'judgement and salvation, lamentation and praise'.

Although this review appears rather late, that does not in any way minimise the importance of this valuable book. The author is a famous scholar in the field of Old Testament and this significant contribution from him must be in the hands of all serious students of the Bible.

K. V. MATHEW

The Good News according to Matthew : by Eduard Schweizer, translated by David E. Green. S.P.C.K., London, 1976. Pp. 573. Price £7.50.

This commentary on the Gospel of Matthew follows the author's commentary in the same style on Mark (*The Good News according to*

Mark). The German original *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (*Das Neue Testament Deutsch*) was published in 1973. These commentaries are intended to make the researches of recent scholars available to the layman in non-technical language. The attempt is highly successful and will be readily appreciated not only by laymen but by specialists too.

The text of the Gospel is printed in full, section by section. The version used in this English Translation of the commentary is the Bible Societies' *Good News for Modern Man* (TEV) with alterations by the author. Following each section of the text the usual pattern of the commentary is first a verse by verse discussion of the critical problems (especially the sources and how Matthew has used them) and then an exposition of the passage with a concluding summary. Inevitably the distinction between these divisions of the commentary cannot always be maintained and there is overlapping. The critical discussions are detailed, although expressed in simple language, and the general reader and preacher may find the expositions of more immediate interest and use. For students of theology, however, both the critical discussions and the expositions will be of great value, and they may consider to what extent one depends upon the other.

Professor Schweizer has performed a most valuable service by setting out in readily assimilable form the results of recent discoveries and research, particularly study of the Qumran Scrolls and Redaction Criticism. He makes frequent reference to the practices and writings of 'the Jewish monks of Qumran', indicating the parallels with and contrasts to the various strands of thought in this Gospel. He also often refers to parallels in later, apocryphal Gospels. He carefully attempts to reconstruct the different stages of the tradition. In the main there are four: what Jesus himself taught and did, the various early traditions, the influence of Matthew's community on these traditions, and finally composition and redaction by Matthew himself.

In line with much work on Matthew in the past few decades he places great emphasis on the part the evangelist's community played in shaping material used in the Gospel, but in line with yet more recent trends he gives full weight also to the role of the evangelist himself. The difficult and basic questions of authenticity are also faced fully and the author gives us his opinions on whether or to what extent a passage accurately reports the words and deeds of Jesus, or what a saying might have meant in its original context. His arguments are so clearly stated that even where one disagrees with his conclusions one is forced to recognize the reasonableness of his position and reconsider one's own. The great worth of the book lies in its positive approach to the material on the basis of the critical reconstruction. The attitudes and situation of the evangelist and his community are clearly and sympathetically pictured, and much in the Gospel is assigned to them or to other Church traditions, and yet a clear picture of Jesus himself, of his teaching, of his uniqueness, also emerges that

commends itself as authentic. The result is that the reader is confronted with the direct challenge of Christ both through authentic reminiscence of his earthly teaching and actions and through the experience, the teaching and even the mistakes of the earliest Christians, in particular of Matthew's community.

With some other recent scholars and on the basis of the detailed and convincing evidence in the Gospel itself Schweizer argues that Matthew's community consisted of Jewish Christians living in Syria in the 80s. There were wise men, teachers, prophets and 'righteous men' among them, but no elders, bishops or deacons. They had great respect for the Law, but differed from strict Jewish Christians in not requiring literal obedience to it. It differed also from Pauline communities in its devotion to Jesus' commandments and his exemplary life. Much in this community lived on in the community behind the *Didache*, which probably came from Syria; the *Gospel of Thomas* was probably a product of this Church; the recently discovered *Apocalypse of Peter* is the first witness to a Church typically Matthaean.

With most scholars Schweizer cannot accept that Matthew the tax collector wrote this Gospel, but he uses the name Matthew for convenience. He suggests that this name was connected with the Gospel because Matthew the tax collector was a familiar figure in the community and certain accounts of Jesus may have been ascribed to him. He cannot, however, have been the compiler of Q.

Because he has his own commentary on Mark to refer the reader to Schweizer has pursued the very reasonable policy of taking more space for passages peculiar to Matthew and those common to Matthew and Luke (for which he generally accepts the 'Q' explanation), and in the Marcan passages of concentrating on the changes Matthew has made. In particular the three chapters of the Sermon on the Mount are given a large proportion of space (131 pages out of 516 pages altogether on the actual commentary) and this part of the book will be of special interest and value.

To make the book more attractive to the general reader there is a complete absence of footnotes and there are only a very few references to the opinions of other scholars. In the Introduction there is a short Bibliography. The author has published the scholarly grounds for certain unusual hypotheses in various places but hopes to assemble his articles in a single collection. This would be a very useful aid for scholars following up the ideas here. Technical terms are avoided; an exception to this, which does not seem to be necessary, is frequent use of 'eschaton'. Greek and Hebrew (and Latin) words are also avoided, but surely some reference to 'Abba' would have been in place in the discussion of the address of the Lord's Prayer (pp. 149-151; Matt. 6:9), as it is used on pp. 363 and 493.

The style of writing is straightforward, though not over-simplified, and clarity is usually excellent. Understandably, however, in a book

of this length, there are obscure passages, perhaps due sometimes to the need for abbreviation. It is not at all clear, for example, with regard to the sayings about cutting off hand and foot and taking out an eye in what sense Matthew 'undoubtedly takes them literally' (p. 365). It is confusing to be told that the Greek word in the parable of the ten girls 'almost always means "torches"' (p. 465) and yet 'in Judith 10:22 and all the papyrus remains that have been discovered the Greek word means "lamps"' (p. 466). On pp. 402 and 410 it is implied that the instance of "Kingdom of God" in 21:31 is the only one in Matthew, which is not true (at least in present texts) as the author knows elsewhere (p. 287 on 12:28; it also occurs in 19:24 and 21:43). There is, incidentally, an error on the dust cover, where Matthew is called 'the longest Gospel'. It is divided into the highest number of chapters, but Luke is actually the longest.

Although the reconstruction of the attitudes of Matthew and of his community are generally convincing and illuminating, sometimes one is uneasy about how much the evidence can really support, especially when Schweizer claims to find distinctions between the community and Matthew himself, or when he claims that Matthew is using a tradition that he himself did not fully agree with. One feels that too much is made of some of the changes made by Matthew in the Marcan material, and sometimes that an exposition, though it may be good and helpful Christian teaching, cannot really be drawn from the passage itself. Inevitably, because the author cannot keep on saying 'probably', many statements are too dogmatic, and some are not sufficiently argued for.

The one critical aspect in which the commentary is lacking is textual criticism. Sometimes the variants noted and briefly discussed are well in line with the opinions of recent textual studies, but on other occasions important variants and possible textual explanations are neglected and textual notes represent the situation inadequately. For example he too readily accepts other explanations for agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark, when a textual solution is at least possible (9:20, p. 228; 22:34-5, pp. 424-425; 26:68, pp. 483, 500). There is a very perplexing textual note on 23:14 (p. 433): 'Verse 14 is not found in any of the ancient manuscripts; it was added by a copyist on the basis of Mark 12:40.' I suppose he means 'the most ancient manuscripts', but it has long been recognized that the oldest manuscripts are not necessarily the most reliable. Schweizer might have considered whether it is not more probable that this verse of Mark, with a further criticism of the religious authorities, was unlikely to have been omitted by Matthew and quite likely to have dropped out of the text because of the identical beginnings of the verses: 'Woe to you teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Hypocrites!'

Professor Schweizer has the great gift of lucid analysis and applies it brilliantly to many theological topics. In particular there are eleven

excursuses which make valuable comments on questions such as the Virgin Birth, the Problem of Sin and the nature of the Sermon on the Mount. There are some questions, however, for which the reader is referred back to the author's commentary on Mark. This is reasonable, of course, but it means that important topics such as Heaven and Hell and the Resurrection are not treated fully here. Usually he maintains the distinction between what Matthew and other early Christians believed and the essence of their belief that we can accept today, but sometimes this is blurred. In the discussion on the Virgin Birth (pp. 32-35) he seems to me to underestimate the significance this may have had for Matthew and the Christian community.

The expositions are notable for their insight and their relevance to modern times and problems. Many sermons will be made more vivid and relevant by suggestions in this commentary. Among the host of illuminating comments I found were those on 'as it is in heaven' from the Lord's Prayer (p. 153), the saying about sparrows (p. 249) and guardian angels (pp. 367-8). Some of Schweizer's views on various topics of importance in Matthew may be quoted here. On the subject of the Law he says that as Matthew identifies Jesus with Wisdom, 'if God's Wisdom, Word and Law have, so to speak, become flesh in Jesus, there can be no question of tossing the Law overboard (5:17-18); on the contrary it is only in Jesus that the real purpose of the Law is revealed (5:20, 21-48; 11:28-30)' (p. 447). The two commandments to love God and to love the neighbour are important not because all other essential commandments come from them, but 'because they are the *only* ones that need be obeyed' (p. 425).

With regard to the commission of Peter (16:18-19), the 'rock' is Peter himself, not his confession, but Matthew imputes no merit to Peter for his strength of faith and does not describe him in especially laudatory terms. Historically Peter had a unique position, but the successor of Jesus can only be the community as a whole. There is room for discussion whether a single leader (pastor, bishop, Pope) may be useful to the community, but this must be understood to be one form of organization among many (pp. 341-344).

The Christian community is a brotherhood: there are no honorific titles in Matthew's community. 'The Christian community, he implies, must be absolutely egalitarian—titleless—if it is to avoid Pharisaic pride, and foster the honest concern for others that Jesus bids' (p. 439 on 23:7-10). The statement that Jesus is present where two or three come together in his name 'denies importance to the presence of an institution, the size of the community, the sanctity of the place, the blessing of an official functionary, or visible success in the world. It is only the presence of love that confers the presence—and the power—of Christ on the community' (p. 375 on 18:20).

With sound exegesis Schweizer shows that Jesus cannot be regarded as a revolutionary activist or the opposite: 'Jesus refused to

identify either with the revolutionary Zealots or with the politically conservative Sadducees or with the Pharisees who were inclined to retreat from political life' (p. 206). Albert Schweitzer's suggestion that Jesus wanted to inaugurate the Kingdom by force is contradicted by the Sermon on the Mount and other sayings (p. 262 on 11:12). No social movement can be identified with the Kingdom of God 'for that Kingdom exists not as institutions in a fixed place but as acts of individual love everywhere. That, of course, does not rule out institutions and communal endeavour; but it leaves no room for fanaticism. The ultimate sovereignty must be God's, i.e. the desire to help men, not control them' (p. 454 on 24:26). God's Kingdom has already broken through 'in the authority and power that touches men in Jesus and makes them whole.' 'This does not abolish its futurity, quite the contrary. It is the coming Kingdom that breaks through here, and without the prospect of a fulfilment to come the promises would be empty' (p. 289). There are wise comments on that fulfilment: men watching for the coming Kingdom must neither be fanatical nor negligent, but 'they must remain faithful for decades or even centuries' (p. 468 on 25:13). God's faithfulness guarantees that history is not meaningless confusion: 'All suffering and striving, all hope and despair will not be forgotten, but will find their reward. But, as in the Old Testament and above all in the coming of Jesus, this fulfilment will again and again appear surprisingly different from what men expect' (p. 390).

Schweizer has an excellent discussion of the relevance of Jesus to modern questions of conscience, including military service and the responsibility of a judge (pp. 205-209). The decisions involved are not easy and 'there will always be situations in which members of the same community are called by God to arrive at different decisions' (p. 206).

Indeed it is the main achievement of this commentary to bring home the direct relevance of the Good News and its challenge to us today. It carries with it a sense of the urgent and authentic proclamation of Jesus that aims to convict us. For Matthew takes God's judgement seriously just as he rejoices in the sheer mercy of God's grace. There is a challenge to 'Africans and Asians in the community of Jesus' for Schweizer feels that they 'may well be called upon to show to "Christian" Europe what Christian life really is' (p. 216 on 8:5-13). There is a challenge to a local community as a whole in the parable of the lost sheep: someone must get up and go after the one going astray; they must not espouse the comfortable theory that self-restraint is better (pp. 369-70 on 18:10-14, 15-18). There is a challenge to the preacher from the Mission Charge: 'The messenger's personal authority and integrity must be believed in if his preaching is actually to bring salvation and judgement and not just remain a theological lecture' (p. 239 on 10:12-13).

These quotations reveal something of how thought-provoking this commentary is for the study of Matthew's Gospel and how stimulating for our understanding of the Church and of personal Christian discipleship. Many readers will be very grateful to Professor Schweizer for his painstaking work.

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The Power and Meaning of Love : by Thomas Merton. Sheldon Press, London, 1976. Pp. 151. Price £4.00 (cloth); £1.95 (paper).

Thomas Merton on Zen : by Thomas Merton. Sheldon Press, London, 1976. Pp. 137. Price £4.95 (cloth); £2.50 (paper).

It is good that these essays have been reprinted. The first set belongs to the 1950s, while the essays on Zen were written about ten years later.

In *The Power and Meaning of Love*, the first and last essays show how the life both of the Church and of society is corrupted by the absence of love. The peril and misery of the modern world is seen in its vain attempt to build a better society by the use of power and techniques divorced from God and without love. But without love we cannot be truly human, and still less can we fulfil the purpose of our creation, which is to share in the life of God himself.

Love has to be sacrificial: 'True love leads a man to fulfilment, not by drawing things to himself, but by forcing him to transcend himself and to become something greater than himself... It demands that he "lose his life" in order to find it again on a higher level—in Christ' (p. 4).

Our need to love is manifested even in the substitutes which masquerade as the real thing, both in secular society and in the Church. The test of our love is whether we treat others as persons; to treat another as an 'object' means that I am not loving that person 'as myself'. Love that does not rise to being inter-personal is usually a sign of immaturity; the cost of real inter-personal relations is too high, and so love is directed to unworthy or even unreal objects.

Merton describes two of the ways in which love is corrupted when people are loved in the abstract and not as persons. One is the 'romantic' error which constantly seeks for an impossible ideal and has no time to love the people actually met in daily life. The other

is the 'authoritarian' error, which seeks to force others into conformity with some standard to which they must attain to be worthy of being loved.

And yet genuine love does indeed have transforming power :

If I allow the Holy Spirit to work in me, if I allow Christ to use my heart in order to love my brother with it, I will soon find that Christ loving in me and through me has brought to light Christ in my brother. And I will find that the love of Christ in my brother, loving me in return, has drawn forth the image and reality of Christ in my own soul (p. 30).

The last essay (which refers to certain tendencies in the U.S.A. during the 1950s) shows the utter incompatibility of any form of fanaticism (e.g., in totalitarian movements) with Christian love. In particular, Merton holds that the Church can never rightly become a mass-movement or use propaganda methods to attract members, since the personal decision for Christ must always be sacrosanct. And, though discipline is necessary in the life of the Church, the last word must always rest with love expressed through pastoral concern—a principle which church authorities forget at their peril.

Love and faith are intimately connected. Christian love is 'at every moment a work of faith : not only faith in dogmas . . . not only faith in abstract propositions, but faith in the present reality of Christ, faith in the living dialogue between our soul and Christ, faith in the Church of Christ as the one great and central reality which gives meaning to the cosmos' (p. 27).

This is the link between the general theme of the book and the remaining four essays, which study aspects of the Christian practice of contemplation with its necessary accompaniment in an ascetic life. Two of these are historical, 'The Primitive Carmelite Ideal' being noteworthy for its description of a tradition of spirituality which unites a life of strict asceticism and contemplation with a charismatic freedom in bearing witness to the Church like that of Elijah.

The two remaining essays are perhaps the best in the book, as here Merton shares with us his own experience. It is often asserted that contemplation and asceticism have no part in an evangelical Christianity. They are accused of being attempts to storm heaven by one's own strength, of being a form of 'justification by works', of being an escape from the real world and a shirking of responsibility for the neighbour, etc. In 'Notes for a Philosophy of Solitude' Merton points to the danger of such perversions, but holds that rootedness in a scriptural faith and competent spiritual guidance are the best protection. He says that the Desert Fathers were admired 'not so much for their extreme asceticism as for their charity and discretion'. 'A man could live entirely separate from the Christian community . . . and still be full of the charity of Christ . . . only

because he was completely empty of himself But the emptiness is for the sake of fullness; the purpose of the solitary life is, if you like, contemplation. But not contemplation in the pagan sense of an intellectual, esoteric enlightenment, achieved by ascetic technique. The contemplation of the Christian solitary is the awareness of the divine mercy transforming and elevating his own emptiness and turning it into the presence of perfect love, perfect fullness' (pp. 57-8).

Merton makes it very clear that the calling of a solitary is not a matter of personal choice and inclination, and that his calling is essentially ecclesial. In the name of his brothers and as a sign to them, he is a man who accepts the burden of facing himself as he really is in the presence of God. Most of us refuse this painful task and seize any excuse to escape from it—whether by immersion in the social round, or by finding consolation in religion or by devoting ourselves to 'good works'. But the solitary lives with the emptiness, unsatisfactoriness and meaninglessness of his own life, and so learns 'a deep, pure and gentle sympathy with all other men'; and this is 'the doorway by which he enters into the mystery of God and brings others into that mystery by the power of his love and his humility' (p. 55). The prayer and humility of solitaries invisibly renews the life of the Church and communicates itself to those who remain 'in the world' by helping them 'to regain a clearer vision, a sharper and more uncompromising (text has 'unpromising') appreciation of Christian truth' (p. 59). The need for such a ministry to recall the Church from its barren superficiality to a deeper faith is obvious.

The short essay on the ascetic teaching of St. John of the Cross is also illuminating. His austerity must always be seen 'in the clear perspectives of the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, the profound discourses in the Gospel of St. John, and particularly the mystery of the Passion and the Resurrection of the Son of God' (p. 74), as otherwise it will seem 'pointlessly inhuman'. The sternness of John of the Cross is not directed against natural values in themselves (as is proved by his appreciation of beauty, his superb poetry and his deep friendship); but he insisted on the 'hierarchy of values' which are at the heart of the Gospel itself, and he knew well the extent to which undisciplined desires separate from God and from the heritage to which his children are called. So, as Merton says, 'even those who are not themselves mystics can profit from reading the works of John of the Cross, if only they remember to see them in perspective' (p. 76). In this connection one may recall the reproach sometimes heard in India, that Christians often show so little sign of loving God *for himself*, rather than for his gifts.

While the first of these two books is entirely concerned with the Christian tradition, *Merton on Zen* introduces us to a totally different spiritual world, and is an outstanding contribution to dialogue. He is of course writing for Christians, endeavouring to allow Zen to be seen as it really is, and also making suggestions how Christians can relate

to it. It seems that he has had some success in giving an account of Zen which followers of that path can recognize as valid, since one of them says in the introduction that his 'comments on Zen Buddhism belong to the best that a Westerner has produced'. In addition his Christian remarks show a clear recognition of the difference between the two worlds; and while he is glad to note the points at which they seem to converge, he wisely refuses to claim more than is justified at this early stage of contact.

Merton regards the essential Zen as that of the Chinese 'Southern School', and frequently refers to its leading modern exponent, Suzuki, who was a personal friend.

One great difficulty that hampers Christians in their attempts to discover what Hinduism or Buddhism is really about is that their mind is often dominated by certain fixed ideas; for example, that they are based on 'false' doctrines which lead to a world-denying asceticism, whose end is the destruction of personality or its dissolution in a pantheistic ocean of being. Or else they try to 'explain' them in terms of philosophical or theological categories which simply do not apply to them. But if, for instance, one seeks to understand the Buddhist 'void' apart from its own context, it is not surprising that the result is a mere caricature.

Merton therefore has to begin by pointing out all the things that Zen is *not*. It is not a religion, or a doctrine, or a philosophy, or an asceticism; it is not even an 'experience', if this is thought of as something that 'I' can 'have' or possess. It is not a kind of individualistic, subjective purity, in which the monk can rest and find spiritual refreshment by discovering and enjoying his own interiority. Nor is it by any means a simple withdrawal from the outer world of matter to an inner world of spirit. It is not a system at all, and the Zen masters vigorously contest every attempt to rationalize or verbalize it. So when Zaehner, for instance, treats it as a form of pantheistic monism, he makes the true Zen inaccessible.

Perhaps the most that can be said about it is that it is a 'path', or that it is 'an Asian form of religious existentialism', which 'aims at breaking through the conventional structures of thought and ritual, in order that the subject may attain to an authentic personal experience of the inner meaning of life' (p. 52). It is 'not a resting in one's own interiority, but a complete release from bondage to the limited and subjective self' (p. 32). 'Those who recognize an objective world and find their mind undisturbed are in true dhyana' (p. 23).

In Zen the empirical 'I' has to disappear through an awakening to freedom from all forms of bondage, even the most subtle. Zen man seeks to 'divest himself completely of this "I" and all its works in order to discover the deeper spontaneity that comes out of the ground of Being'. Merton suggests that 'this corresponds to the

kind of life that the NT writers and the Fathers describe as 'life in the Spirit', always allowing for the difference involved by a new and supernatural perspective' (p. 58).

The Zen path is undoubtedly a hard and difficult one, and cannot be followed without the most rigorous obedience and discipline; and even in this, every kind of attachment either to a master or to methods has to be broken. 'One might almost say that the purpose of Zen training' (including the famous *koans* with their apparently meaningless non-sequiturs) 'is to push the monk by force into a kind of dark night, and to bring him as quickly and efficaciously as possible into a quandary where, forced to face and reject his most cherished illusions, driven almost to despair, he abandons all false hopes and makes a breakthrough into complete humility, detachment and spiritual poverty' (p. 63).

'The absolutely pure consciousness of the Zen experience is not negation and annihilation of existent beings'—so the monk is encouraged to do manual work and never to forget his responsibility towards those on whose labour he depends for his food (p. 64). This experience rather 'implies the complete acceptance of things as they are, but with a totally transformed consciousness which does not see them as objects but which, so to speak, 'gazes out' from the midst of them. The final awakening of Zen consciousness is not simply the loss of self, but the finding and gift of self in and through all' (p. 88). The aim of Zen is 'to come to grips with reality without the mediation of logical verbalizing' (p. 95; cf. Wittgenstein's 'Don't think; look!').

It is obvious that Christianity and Zen are two very different things, and that in themselves they are incommensurable. But it does not follow that they are therefore incompatible. 'The importance of this Zen intuition of reality is, in my opinion as a Catholic,' says Merton, 'its metaphysical honesty. It refuses to make a claim to any special revelation or to a mystical light, and yet if it is followed on, in line with its own vast and open perspectives, it is certainly compatible with a revelation of inscrutable freedom, love and grace' (p. 89).

For Buddhism 'doctrine' is of only secondary importance, and what is essential is 'experience'. On the other hand, Christianity begins from a revelation, communicated in words and statements which the believer accepts as true; but concentration on the truth of doctrines has often allowed Christians to forget that the heart of Christianity is the *living experience* of unity in Christ which far transcends all conceptual formulations (cf. 1 John 1:2-3; p. 97). But to recognize the importance of experience in Christianity does not involve the facile agreement that all 'mystics' arrive at the same experience and that they simply leave behind the doctrines and creeds of their particular faiths (the 'names and forms' of the Upanishads), so that all religions 'meet at the top' (p. 101). Such a conclusion, Merton holds, is very premature, since we do not know enough to be able to

say that fundamental beliefs can be thrown off 'like a suit of clothes', or that experience is totally unaffected by belief. We know that Eastern spirituality is more ready to discard its philosophical and religious framework (cf. the shocking advice of a Zen master, 'If you meet the Buddha, kill him!'); but the testimony of most Christian mystics is that the Christ of faith remains 'present as an ikon at the centre of Christian contemplation' (p. 102). It is however pertinent to ask 'to what extent does the theology of a theologian without experience claim to interpret correctly the 'experienced theology' of the mystic who is perhaps not able to articulate the meaning of his experience in a satisfactory way?' (p. 103). Merton also poses a question (p. 20) which Indian theologians must also put to their Western colleagues: 'Is Martin Buber's formula (the "I-Thou") absolutely the only one that validly describes the ultimate experience?'

To this reviewer it seems that this book has a special interest for us in India because, though expressed in entirely different terms, Zen bears a certain family resemblance to our own advaitic tradition—not indeed to the formal intellectual system of Vedanta philosophy, but to advaita itself which is the soul of Indian spirituality. What Merton has to say about Zen surely throws light on the possibility of a fruitful meeting of Christian faith and advaita.

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Mystery and Imagination : by R. P. C. Hanson. S.P.C.K., London, 1976. Pp. 113. Price £2.25.

Mystery and Imagination is a readable booklet of one hundred and thirteen pages; it contains the slightly modified 1974 Firth Lectures at Nottingham University, yet is, in a very profound way, the personal expression of faith of a man who is both Professor of Historical and Contemporary Theology and a bishop in the Anglican communion. The book is an attempt to do theology amidst people who may be aware of existential questions and, at times, even raise them, but who would normally not think of such questions as peculiarly religious.

The author presumes an element of faith to be present in all such questioning and sets out to build bridges of understanding between the professional theologian who would tend to systematize the elements of the Christian faith, and the layman whose theological awareness may be equally profound but who lacks both training and inclination to come to grips with the mysteries of life in an ordered system. It should not be surprising therefore to find among the arguments which Hanson

advances the modestly expressed conviction that genuine theologizing ought to be free from the traditional demand for objectivity and accept, instead, the inevitable and subjective element which is to be found in every genuine human endeavour. Hanson himself seems to demonstrate throughout his booklet how such doing of theology is to be understood.

His reflections on Christianity begin with man and the mystery of his existence. In his attempt to open the ivy-grown windows of Cathedral and Theological School, the author does not start directly from the Bible, but begins with affirmations of man in his being and essence which may also be found in similar reflections of man by poets and writers like Blaise Pascal, D. H. Lawrence and Walt Whitman.

Here man emerges as both rational and irrational, as one with animals yet somehow distinct. 'Man is so sublime—and so ridiculous' (p. 27). Wisely, Hanson himself does not attempt to analyze this mysterious being 'man', nor does he suggest that Christianity has ready-made definitions and solutions. He does, however, venture to claim that Christianity has something relevant to say and that its unexpected resources might, in fact, meet the problems which man poses and which he has set for himself (p. 29). This something then leads us to the Son of God, the meaning of the Cross, to the give and take of creating and shaping life from the elements of 'mere existence'. Forgiveness and the person and work of Christ take up a rather substantial part of Hanson's reflections. The author's erudition, though purposely disguised, shines through the easy manner with which he comes to terms with the historical and theological complexities of the subjects under consideration. Difficult Christological arguments of centuries appear apparently simple and lucid, without, however, losing their sharpness and profundity.

One ought not, of course, expect a systematic treatise in a booklet of this kind. The subtitle, *Reflections on Christianity*, should sufficiently warn the reader not to expect too much along these lines. Nonetheless, the author's reflections are not strung together at random. A lifetime of service in the church, of reading, thinking and teaching finds expression on almost every page to make the whole a rather attractive apologia, indeed, for the veracity and depth of Christian theology at whatever level one seriously comes to terms with its assertions.

The book is to be highly recommended both to the casual enquirer and to the serious student of the questions of life which ultimately are the questions every human asks because such asking sets us apart from the lower species in the animal kingdom.

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La Resurrezione nell' insegnamento, nella profezia, nelle apparizioni di Gesù, Vol. I : by Antonio Ammassari. Città Nuova Editrice, Roma, 1975. Pp. 232. Price Lire 3000.

The book is a study of the experience of the resurrection of Christ as found in the Gospels, more particularly in the teaching (chs. 1-2), the prophecy (ch. 3) and the appearances of Jesus (chs. 4ff.).

Jesus accepted the biblical-Jewish doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. In an original interpretation of Exod. 36 he defended it against the teaching of the Sadducees (ch. 1). He completed this doctrine in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, where he gives us an eschatological picture of the condition of the dead in the period between death and resurrection (ch. 2). He publicly foretold his own resurrection when he referred to the temple which he would rebuild in three days, and when he refused to give to his adversaries any sign but the sign of Jonah (ch. 3).

The next chapter, the longest (pp. 85-138), analyzes in minute detail the narratives of Christ's appearances to the women. The reader is warned, however, that it would be fatal to overlook the fact that not all the traditions concerning the resurrection of Jesus have come down to us in the Gospels. We must, therefore, try to discover these lost testimonies. Three main sources are examined : (1) Judeo-Christian pre-apostolic missions (cf. Acts), and the reaction to this preaching ; (2) the prayer against the 'Nazarenes', found in the 12th among the 'Eighteen Blessings'; (3) the episode of Matt. 27:62-66 (the work of the 'last redactor' of Matt.) studied against the background of Jewish customs regarding capital punishment (ch. 5). Chapter 6 examines the narrative of Jesus' appearance on the mountain (Matt. 28:16-20). The pericope is said to be a conflation of two recensions, viz. one baptismal, the other missionary, the distinction being based upon Christ's twofold command, to baptize and to teach. The mission to teach, we are told, originally was entrusted to all the disciples, not only to the eleven, a restriction which was introduced by the final redactor. The mission field, on the other hand, was not intended to include the Gentiles as the final redactor has it ; the mission was intended for the Jews in the Dispersion only. At this point a digression on the Son of Man is added (pp. 172-179). Similarly the command to baptize is the occasion for an essay on the trinitarian baptismal formula (ch. 7) ; though interesting in itself, nevertheless this study might better have been relegated to the end of the book. Luke's narrative of the paschal events (ch. 8) contrasts with the study of the Matthaean and Marcan narratives. The treatment of Luke 24 is brief (pp. 197-206) and is restricted to an analysis of the contents, without preoccupation about sources or original text and its redactional development, as was the case for Matthew and Mark.

A last chapter proposes some 'provisional' conclusions, 'pro-

visional' probably in view of the fact that at least one more volume is intended to follow, when a general synthesis may be given.

It is not the author's intention to offer the reader a critical examination of the opinions which modern authors hold concerning the resurrection of Jesus. His purpose rather is to compare the various narratives in their present form (with their variant readings), in order to detect the original nucleus of the text and the factors which have influenced the tradition of the primitive text, viz, apologetical, apocalyptic, and eschatological interests in the light of the paschal faith. Besides these influences there are, of course, the normal accidental variations due to glosses, errors of copyists, etc. The author's method is original, his arguments often subtle, based upon many hypotheses, leading to conclusions which scholars, often I am afraid, may hesitate to accept, as for example, the opinion that the young man seen in the tomb on Easter morning (Mark 16:5) was Christ himself. One might have expected to find a chapter on the Pauline tradition of the resurrection : the present volume is practically restricted to the Gospels. Possibly vol. II may consider the doctrine of Acts and the letters.

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