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BOOK REVIEWS

Jesus and the Politics of his Day

Edited by Ernest Bammel and C.F.D. Moule. Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. xi x 511. £37.50.

Some fifteen years ago Professor Moule remarked to me that the views of the late S.G.F. Brandon, which had recently been advanced in two publications (*Jesus and the Zealots,* 1967, and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth,* 1968) deserved "full dress treatment". I imagined at the time that he meant an extended review in a learned journal; but in fact he must have already envisaged a period of research by a team of eminent scholars, only now coming to fruition in this impressive (though regrettably expensive) collection of studies. Not that Brandon is the ostensible subject of the book, which (as its title implies) has a wider range than any one scholar's work; and in any case there have been and still are many others who argue for a "political Christ" – the longest essay in this book consists of a comprehensive review by Ernest Bammel of "The revolution theory from Reimarus to Brandon". Yet his arguments dominate this collection from beginning to end, and the seriousness with which these (mainly) Cambridge scholars have addressed themselves to the issue is a tribute to the seriousness of the challenge which the work of Brandon and others have presented to the traditional Christian understanding of a non-revolutionary, non-political Jesus.

Put very crudely, Brandon's case is that Jesus was in fact a rebel against the Roman authority, a zealot and a revolutionary; that the gospels have deliberately suppressed this side of his activity; but that certain tell-tale traces remain of a more violent Jesus in such episodes as the Tribute Money, the Triumphal Entry, the Cleansing of the Temple and the Two Swords. These episodes, and several more besides, are each here subjected to careful and thorough analysis. The result is seldom claimed to be conclusive, but the weight of probability is shown in each case to tell against Brandon's conclusion. Our knowledge of Jesus' cultural and political environment has been gradually increasing; this enables each particular episode to be set in a wider context of probabilities, and a number of more general essays (on "The Poor and the Zealots", "The opposition between Jesus and Judaism" and several other similar topics) has the effect of exposing further weak points in Brandon's reconstruction.

All this is (as befits these distinguished authors) patient, painstaking and judicious. No easy points are scored; there is just a slow erosion, detail by detail, of the probability of Brandon's interpretation of the evidence being correct. It is only on p. 445 that a point is made (by Bammel in his study of "The trial before Pilate") that gives a different turn to the whole debate. The case for "Jesus the Zealot" ultimately depends on what Brandon himself called "the one fact of which we can be certain, namely, the Roman execution of Jesus for sedition" (Trial, p. 141). Taking his stand on this one apparently firm piece of historical knowledge he judges all the gospel evidence which appears inconsistent with it (which is the greater part) to be tendentious fabrication by the early church, and seeks to recover a more reliable account from those few scraps of the gospel tradition which preserve traces of the real, seditious, anti-Roman Jesus. But suppose this "one certain fact" is itself debatable? After four pages of careful discussion Bammel reaches a conclusion that was advocated more than eighty years ago and since forgotten. He writes, "A scrutiny yields the result that the main traits of the pieces of evidence point rather to a Jewish execution than a Roman one". Here at last the judicious approach is as deadly as any rhetorical attack. It is not necessary to show that the execution *was* a Jewish one, only that it might have been. By doing so, Bammel removes at a blow the one certainty on which most "political" reconstructions have relied. At this point Brandon's entire thesis collapses like a house of cards.

Yet even this is perhaps not the final coup de grâce. Much of Brandon's argumentation depended on the assumption that the gospel accounts of Jesus' trial and execution simply do not hold water. "Ludicrous", "preposterous", "manifestly absurd", are phrases that occur again and again in his work with reference to particular episodes. Now if this is your estimation of the gospel narratives you are bound to disbelieve them: almost any reconstruction may seem preferable to that suggested by a narrative which you judge to be manifestly absurd and implausible. Such a view may not be greatly challenged by the painstaking discussion of particular points which fills the Bammel-Moule volume: you do not come to believe that a fairy story is true just because certain secondary features of the landscape can be shown to be plausible. You need to be persuaded that the whole story is worthy of serious attention. This is essentially a *literary* judgement, one that countless readers of the gospels (and not only Christian ones) have made instinctively for themselves, but which deserves to be presented as carefully and honestly as the historical arguments assembled here. We are told in the Preface that some of these essays were completed a decade ago and that the publication was much delayed. Had the same team of scholars been working today, it is possible that they might have made room for one or two collaborators from other disciplines which have recently been making a contribution to New Testament study, in which case the argument for a non-violent Jesus might have been presented even more persuasively.

A.E. Harvey

The Eucharist in Bible and Liturgy

G.D. Kilpatrick. Cambridge University Press 1984. Pp. 120. £15.00

"Differences in words and the ideas behind them separate us from the world in which the Eucharist came into being. Part of my exploration will be directed towards these differences". On the face of it, it may be thought that this book covers much the same ground as J. Jeremias' *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus.* But the content and, even more so, the aim are both very different. Jeremias' primary concern is the analysis of the material, but Dr. Kilpatrick's study endeavours to show how our present eucharistic worship might be affected were we to take the biblical texts seriously. To this end a liturgical draft is given in the appendix. Superficially this might be thought to resemble some of the texts of the ASB, though in fact there are significant differences, the result of the conclusions upon which the draft is based.

Dr. Kilpatrick is in substantial agreement with Jeremias in respect of the priority of Mark 14 as interpreted by I Corinthians 11. In other respects, however, he reaches very different conclusions. For example, he upholds the originality of Shorter Luke on textual grounds; he rightly questions whether the Last Supper was, properly speaking, a Passover meal; he offers the interpretation of the term *anamnesis* as 'proclamation' rather than the familiar retrospective memorial or even 'souvenir'; importantly, also, he allows much more weight to the evidence of the Fourth Gospel in connection with the possible existence of sacred meals in hellenistic Judaism and the Qumran community. In all this the first five chapters of the book provide a brief, comprehensive and stimulating study of the New Testament evidence. Little is said about what Jesus and his disciples thought they were doing when they took their common meal. The prime concern is what the Church made of it in the apostolic period.

The description of the Last Supper in Mark, as received and handed on to the Corinthians by St. Paul, is to be understood as the 'charter-story' of the liturgical eucharist. To use Dom Gregory Dix's distinction, this is the source but not the model. In this approach Dr. Kilpatrick acknowledges his debt to S.H. Hooke and the 'myth and ritual' school of thought. Though the myth and ritual approach has been fruitfully used in Old Testament studies, scholars have not felt nearly so free when they come to the New. Rather than use the tendentious word 'myth' (a caution amply justified by recent events) Dr. Kilpatrick substitutes the neutral term 'character-story', which carries no hidden judgement on the truth or falsehood of the story in question. But granted that its nature and content can be established (p.86), then we are bound to take it as the regulative source of our own eucharistic practice, setting the limits to the propriety or otherwise of what is done.

This is where the problems start. In the first place there is the general problem raised, for example, by D.E. Nineham in *The Use and Abuse of the Bible,* and acknowledged by the present author in his opening sentence, of the great gulf between the world of the Bible and the world of today. The discussion of a particular single topic, the Bible and Liturgy, serves to throw the problem into even higher relief. The solution, it is maintained, will lie in the recovery of a truer understanding of the biblical concepts implicit in the charter-story, in particular those of 'covenant' and 'sacrifice', and also a more exact grasp of the distinction between 'blessing' and 'thanksgiving'. The outcome of such an approach may be seen in the author's liturgical draft. It does not seem to be too outrageous to the sensibilities of the modern worshipper, but it will be best to leave it to each individual reader to determine the actual measure of its success.

The second problem is a hermeneutical one. Putting it baldly, has the charter-story got it right? While we may accept the explanation of the addition of the command to repeat in I Corinthians, there is also the question of the omission of the vow of abstinence, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine &c". The words lend strong support to the suggestion of the presence of a strong eschatological reference in the Eucharist at this time, which is suspected on other grounds[1], and which was lost at a later period. The charter-story is itself selective, and this should give some pause for thought before drawing conclusions too readily.

The long history of the development of the liturgy in East and West and the theological reflections on it do not fall within the scope of Dr. Kilpatrick's study. Nevertheless, this is important in accounting for any possible resistance on the part of "a long-suffering Christian public" to the practical implications of his conclusions. The distinction between sacrifice and sacrament might present such a difficulty. The Eucharist is, surely, both sacrifice and sacrament, the material bearing eternal significance, the vehicle of divine power. The unfortunate and well documented preoccupation with 'the moment of consecration' may distort the understanding of the sacrament but it does not invalidate it, even when, in the words of the late E.C. Ratcliff, the Eucharist has ceased to be regarded as a pass to the Royal Enclosure and is only seen as a national health card entitling you to benefits for self and friends!

Anglicans of the Prayer Book tradition are in a peculiarly awkward position. If Christ has indeed made the one, full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, then is not any notion of eucharistic action in any sense of the words entirely excluded by implication? The whole weight of the service, as a result, came to rest on the act of communion and the fruits of it. The balance is being recovered only slowly and somewhat painfully in the new services.

The truth is that people worship in their living traditions that have grown and developed over the centuries. There have been misunderstandings and distortions, but the light has not been quenched. Part of the process of the renewal of the liturgy will be the identification of origins of the distortion, just as equally part is the illumination of the source from which each of the various traditions stem. While the present book is primarily concerned with the latter task, the author is well aware of the need to make it speak clearly to us in our worship. The difficulties involved are not unlike those of enabling the Bible to speak with equal clarity and distinctness in preaching.

Hugh Bates

1. See, for example, J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies,* Chapter XI, 'The Earliest Christian Liturgical Sequence?' Studies in Biblical Theology No. 34, SCM Press, 1962.

Biblical Faith: An Evolutionary Approach

Gerd Theissen. SCM Press. 1984. Pp. xiii + 194. £5.95.

One of the besetting sins of New Testament scholars (and no doubt of other scholars too) is insularity. But no-one could accuse Gerd Theissen of this. In previous books he has applied the methods of sociology, psychology and structuralist literary criticism to the study of the New Testament, and in his latest book he makes use of biology (and specifically the theory of evolution) to shed light on biblical faith. In concentrating on one or two central points, I shall not be able to do justice to a book which is full of challenging and often illuminating ideas about the nature of biblical faith, the relationship between science and religion, and social ethics. I wish to criticize some of the theses he sets

forth; but I do not wish to detract from his achievement, which is essentially to open one's eyes to the possibility of connections between phenomena which at first sight seem quite different. It is true that some of these connections seem a bit far-fetched; not every reader will be convinced that the information about the sex-life of the stickleback on p. 76 is strictly relevant to a discussion of the biblical prohibition of images! But the experiment of setting biblical studies against a much wider background than usual should surely be welcomed.

Theissen's main argument is that basic categories from the theory of evolution – mutation, selection and adaptation – can also be applied to cultural evolution in general and the biblical tradition in particular. 'Mutation' refers to spontaneous changes in the genetic information of an organism. 'Selection' refers to an increased capacity to survive and reproduce, which gives one organism an advantage over another in a competitive environment. 'Adaptation' refers to an organism's ability to change in response to the demands of the environment. When applied to cultural evolution, 'mutation' refers to the possibility of innovative human behaviour. Thus, in the sphere of biblical religion, Jesus of Nazareth may be seen as a 'mutation' in human life, and his proclamation as offering the possibility of a more successful 'adaptation' to 'ultimate reality'. But there is no place here for 'selection', for Jesus's message is a *protest against selection,* a protest against the principle by which the strong flourish and the weak perish. Selection must be replaced by solidarity. Whereas in the biological model, mutations are selected for survival on the basis of their adaptation to the environment, in its theological analogue the content of the 'mutation' which took place in Jesus is the rejection of the harsh principle of selection, and this is the way in which human adaptation to ultimate reality must finally be achieved. There is thus a fundamental difference between evolution in the biological and in the theological realm.

This disparity introduces a certain amount of confusion into Theissen's argument. I think the problem is that he is trying to do two incompatible things at once. He is seeking to interpret biblical faith as a protest against the harsh principle of selection, in the name of the solidarity between all human beings. Thus, the heart of his argument is that biblical faith is *anti*-evolutionary. But he is also impressed with the possibility of using biological terms *positively* to shed light on biblical faith. The result is a curious hybrid: a mutation (successfully adapted to ultimate reality) whose content is the rejection of the principle of selection. In biological terms this is an absurdity, and this means that the fundamental analogy between biology and theology is incoherent.

Theissen finds a protest against selection and an assertion of the need for human solidarity in biblical monotheism as a whole, in the proclamation and ministry of Jesus, and in the early Christian experience of the Spirit. His underlying goal is perhaps to oppose the pious individualism which characterizes so much of the church's use of the Bible, and to replace this with a much broader concern for the welfare of society as a whole. But he presents this interpretation of biblical faith not as a response to the needs of the contemporary church but as the result of sociological analysis; he claims that from the sociological standpoint, the essence of biblical faith is a protest against selection and an affirmation of solidarity.

This interpretation seems highly questionable. A sociological analysis of biblical monotheism might justifiably reach precisely the opposite conclusion: that biblical monotheism, with its uncompromising polemic against other gods, is an *affirmation* of the principle of selection (or 'election', to use the theological synonym), and a *denial* of human solidarity. Theissen can point to individual features like the vision of universal peace in Is. 2 and the OT's 'bias to the poor', but he does not adequately recognize the fact that polemical monotheism is inseparably bound up with the desire for dominance. This is so even in the exilic and post-exilic origins of strict monotheism, in the Isaianic tradition: the proclamation of Yahweh as the only true God is inseparable from the belief that Jerusalem will shortly become the capital of the world, that foreigners will be enslaved and forced to perform menial tasks, and that those who refuse to do so will be destroyed (Is. 60:10-14, 61:5, etc.). Theissen finds a significant contrast between the 'pacifism' of biblical monotheism and the 'militarism' of polytheism, according to which the gods of an imperialistic nation such as Assyria are seen as conquering the gods of subjugated nations. But if anything, monotheism heightens this aggressiveness towards others, in fantasy if not in fact. The desire to dominate is now justified by proclaiming not the conquest of other people's gods but their non-existence: because Yahweh is the true God and because the gods of the nations are nothing, the destiny of the people of Yahweh is to rule. This is an affirmation of selection and not a protest against it.

Nor is the situation essentially different in the New Testament. The apparent universalism of the proclamation that 'in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek' is illusory, because it results not in universal human solidarity but in sectarian communities hostile to all non-members, both Jews and Greeks. Once again, polemical monotheism expresses the desire to dominate. The people who 'know that an idol has no real existence, and that there is no God but one' (I Cor.8:4) also 'know that the saints will judge the world' (I Cor.6:2). The desire to dominate is integral to biblical polemical monotheism, and this is therefore the precise opposite of a protest against selection and an affirmation of human solidarity. It is easy to evade this conclusion out of a desire to stress the continuity between the apologetic, compromising, and therefore humane faith of our own day, and the uncompromising faith of the Bible. It would be much more comfortable to accept Theissen's interpretation, but in taking the opposite view we are merely putting into practice his own insistence that one should not set arbitrary limits to the sociological investigation of the Bible.

Theissen's book is so wide-ranging that it deserves a much fuller response than is possible here. It should be widely read; but it should be read critically. Its author is very much aware that the principle of 'selection' also applies in the intellectual sphere, and that progress is made here through the falsification of earlier ideas and theories. He will not expect his own views to be immune from this inexorable process.

Francis Watson

Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Krsna Devotion in South India

Friedhelm Hardy. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983. Pp. xxii + 692. £29.00.

How is it possible for physical, sexual human beings to find complete fulfilment in a transcendent, ultimately unknowable deity? It is interesting to compare the various answers which strands of the major world religions give to this question. When, as a non-specialist in Indian religions, I imagine what the response of the Hindu tradition would be, the image that springs to mind is that of an emaciated monk sitting lotus fashion absorbed in contemplation, disciplining himself by long and severe asceticism to deny physical and especially sexual urges. Common sense tells me that this is a ludicrous idea: religion in India is not the exclusive property of ascetic old men; one surely need not suppose that all lusty young Indians abandoned their religious principles when they filled the land with babies. Friedhelm Hardy's book on Viraha Bhakti, is a massive work of scholarship on the emotional and sexual religious devotion which provides an alternative answer to the question of human fulfilment in relation to the transcendent.

Krsna emotionalism as Hardy presents it centres on the range of myths of the god Krsna who comes to the *gopis* (cow-herds - girls and married women) of Vrndavana, makes love to them, but then abandons them, leaving them to long for his return and to re-experience the intimacy with him even within the separation. Hardy explores this religious mythology of love-in-separation at two levels that are interwoven throughout his book. One is what we might call the theological level, probing the implications of emotional bhakti for the concepts of God, personhood, and their relationship. He stresses the humanism of this devotion, in that it repudiates any suggestion that physicality must be denied. Religion is for human wholeness, not fragmentation. The consequence of this view of personhood, however, is that the relation to God must always be characterized not only by love but also by longing, since in respect to sensuality humans are separate from a transcendent God, always turning the emotions to desire for consummation in union with him.

The other level of Hardy's exploration is historical. He discusses the origins of Krsna Bhakti in the wider context of Indian religion, and traces the changes which take place when this type of devotion, originating in South India, moved gradually northward and interacted with more intellectual, doctrinal versions of the religious tradition. He explores one of its re-interpretations through contact with the Gita, another through its contact with the anthropocentric early Tamil culture. Most significant, however, was its combination with the spirituality of the Alvars by which its down-to-earth humanism was integrated into an intellectualistic mysticism of an ineffable transcendent deity.

For a non-specialist the book is both fascinating and, in parts, difficult. It is full of Sanskrit words and abbreviations: these are usually explained or defined when they are first used, but it is obviously impossible to read the book at a sitting and it is hard to keep them all in mind between sessions. A glossary and table of abbreviations would be a great help. Some passages, for example the discussion of the early Alvars and emotional bhakti in the Prabandham (Parts 4.2 and 4.3) seem considerably more specialized than other sections of the book. Hardy is careful, however, to sign-post his way with very helpful statements of plan and summaries; this makes it possible for a non-Indologist to follow the thread of the argument even if some of the detail is lost.

I must leave it to those competent to do so to comment on the historical and technical aspects of Hardy's presentation. What particularly fascinated me was the theological dimension, especially in comparison with the *Brautmystik* or nuptial mysticism strand in the Christian tradition. In both, erotic imagery is used to describe the relationship to the transcendent deity, and in both, men as well as women designate themselves as female (in the Christian tradition the soul is "she"), longing to receive the (male) God. The Song of Songs provides a framework for the development of *Brautmystik* tradition in Christianity as the gopi songs do for Krsna Bhakti. Hardy touches on this parallel briefly in his final section, and warns against an easy assimilation that is insufficently alive to contrasts. This is a warning to be heeded, especially during this time when it is fashionable to declare a mystical unity of religions on the basis of superficial similarities. Nevertheless, the question with which I began is one which every vital religion that holds to a transcendent deity must face. It would therefore be most useful to study Hardy's monumental work on Krsna Bhakti in comparison with answers given by the *Brautmystik* tradition - not least, to dispel the mental image that religion, whether Indian or Christian, is the preserve of ascetic old men who, with God as their ally, frown down on attractive women.

Grace M. Jantzen

Theological Investigations, Volume 18: God and Revelation and Volume 19: Faith and Ministry.

Karl Rahner, S.J. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984. Pp. 304 and 282. £18.50 each.

The publication of these two volumes, which completes the English edition of *Theological Investigations,* virtually coincided with the death of the author on 30th March, three weeks after his eightieth birthday. They contain papers on a wide variety of topics (largely fundamental theology in Volume 18, and current ecclesiastical issues in Volume 19) written during the 1970s. They therefore provide evidence of the major trends in his thinking during the fifth and final decade of his theological activity, so that their publication is especially appropriate at this time. Although they contain few surprises for anyone already familiar with Rahner's thought, it is noticeable that some old preoccupations are quietly dropped (for instance, the notion of Jesus Christ as goal of the evolutionary process) and other themes de-emphasized, as the author concentrates on expressing, often with considerable passion and lucidity, what he had clearly come to regard as of abiding significance in his message. Volume 18 contains in particular some powerful descriptions of "transcendental experience", especially the incomparable 1976 account of "Experience of the Spirit" (pp. 195-206). In such passages

Rahner is evidently speaking from the heart as well as the mind, achieving a union of intellectual theory and personal spirituality which is rare.

There is an embarrassment of riches in these volumes which it would be impossible to survey adequately in a brief review. At the cost of neglecting much which would be worthy of comment, such as the bracing radicalism of Rahner's approach to contemporary church affairs in Volume 19, it seems sensible to concentrate on two features which struck the present reviewer particularly forcefully. The first is that Rahner's final statements concerning "transcendental experience" diverge so markedly from the metaphysics of his early *Spirit in the World* and *Hearers of the Word* that in important respects they amount to a reversal of it. That these changes have emerged gradually over many years, and are masked by a continued use of some of the same transcendentalist terminology, helps to account for the widespread but demonstrably mistaken assumption that Rahner operated with essentially the same set of philosophical presuppositions throughout his career. Secondly, the clarity of many of Rahner's Christological discussions in these volumes has convinced the present reviewer that his claim that a fully orthodox Chalcedonian Christology emerges from the application of his transcendental anthropology to the historical Jesus, i.e. by an "ascending" Christology alone (e.g. Vol. 18 pp. 147-148) is based on seriously flawed arguments, and therefore that his project of trying to dispense with the "descending" Christology of Jesus as the "real symbol" of God, which he had earlier worked out in considerable details (e.g. Volume 4 of *Theological Investigations)* cannot be regarded as a success.

The nub of the difference between the early and late transcendentalism is that the later Rahner no longer seeks to prove by a Maréchalian transcendental deduction that God is implicitly "co-known" in every act of knowledge in the form of an unthematized preapprehension (*Vorgriff*) of "absolute *esse*" which is the condition of the possibility of conceptualization of finite entities. Rather, ontological expressions are avoided in referring to God, for whom the standard term becomes "absolute Mystery" (*Geheimnis*). Furthermore, "incomprehensibility" is declared to be "not one of God's attributes in addition to many others. . .but the starting point always and everywhere determining the understanding of his nature and of its peculiar and unique character" (Vol. 18 p. 92). Inevitably, Rahner comes to stress that this unfathomable Mystery is not knowable in any normal sense of the term, a relation to the Transcendent being achievable not so much by the intellect as by the will exercising an "ultimate free decision" (Vol. 18 p. 103) since "we can at most wonder whether what is beyond (the) field of clear knowledge and autonomously practicable plans amounts to a fall into an abysmal meaninglessness or to being caught up by a sheltering incomprehensibility" (Vol. 18 p. 99). The early Rahner had by contrast sought to refute nihilism by philosophical argument.

Although Rahner makes these themes very much his own, there is little in them which is exclusive to him: the parallels to the philosophy of Karl Jaspers are for example strikingly close. Thus, both stress the importance of what Jaspers calls "boundary situations" of suffering and failure in shattering the attempts of human beings to "suppress and forget" the drive towards the encompassing Mystery which is constitutive of the human spirit (Vol. 18 p. 212). Both also insist that an affirmative courage in the face of one's own death is the indispensable means of achieving "a definitive self-realization of freedom" (Vol. 18 p. 140). Belief in resurrection of the dead is, again according to both Jaspers and Rahner, the mythological expression of the authentic human being's ultimate goal of attaining "definitiveness. . . emerging in time". This "final and definitive consummation" of temporal existence is the real meaning of "eternal life", the notion of "the endless running on of time" being condemned as "dangerous and pernicious" (Vol. 19 pp. 170-177).

It is when he turns to Christology that Rahner begins to diverge markedly from the transcendental existentialism of Jaspers, who decisively rejects the notion of a uniquely authoritative self-revelation of the Transcendent on the ground that the presumption that it has a "self" let alone that it could adequately reveal itself in a single finite individual contradicts its incomprehensibility and its infinity. Rahner by contrast persists in affirming that in Jesus the absolute Mystery achieved "final", "unsurpassable" and "definitive" "self-expression".

Rahner's defence of these traditional-sounding affirmations seems to consist of two crucial elements, which stand out more clearly in these relatively simple late texts than in the often confusing prolixity of some of his earlier statements. First, the term "revelation" applies to Jesus only because the drive to transcendence which is natural to the spirit of *all* men is identified with divine revelation, e.g. "the self-communication of God. . .is. . .essentially. . .the *a priori* dynamism of man's knowledge and freedom towards the immediacy of God himself" (Vol. 19 p. 9). Thus what is usually thought of as a divine movement towards men is identified with a Godward movement by men. This radical redefinition is evident also in an essay on prayer entitled "Dialogue with God?". Here Rahner rejects the view that "God's fundamental word to us" should be sought "in a word that occurs as something additional or a single object among other objects of experience, categorically, at a definite point within the wider field of consciousness"; rather "it is we ourselves in unity, totality, and dependence on the incomprehensible mystery that we call God, the word of God that we ourselves are, and that as such is spoken to us" (Vol. 18 p. 128). It is in line with this interpretation that Rahner draws his well-known conclusion that man's nature and divine grace, our experience of our own spirit and the influence in us of the Holy Spirit, cannot in actuality be distinguished, so that all men who respond positively to the Transcendent are "anonymous Christians" and all human history and all religions are part of the history of revelation (Vol. 19 p. 11). This entirely meets, of course, the substance of Jaspers' criticism of the concept of revelation but only at the cost of so modifying established usage that one suspects that Jaspers would have rejected it as an erosion of the issue.

It follows that since revelation becomes universalized in humanity the fate of Rahner's Christology hangs on whether he can substantiate his claim to Jesus's "unsurpassability". Alas, it seems to the present reviewer that Rahner's case is vitiated by equivocation as he slips from one meaning to another of terms suggesting "finality". The argument centres on the view that Jesus in his death "surrendered (himself) unsupported and unreservedly into the incomprehensibility of God himself". He thereby achieved his own *telos* so that "his death is his resurrection and vice versa, since he entered into definitive life precisely

in death and in no other way" (Vol. 18 p. 167). Rahner then shifts without any evident justification to the claim that Jesus' death must be "final" in an eschatological sense, "unsurpassable" in value, "unique" in the sense of not repeatable by other men, and "definitive" in the sense of paradigmatic for all time. But even granted that Jesus's death was "final" and "definitive" *for himself*, and thus exemplary for all mankind, why should he not merely rank as one among many "paradigmatic individuals" as Jaspers maintains? Rahner freely applies exclusive terms to Jesus such as "absolute salvation bringer" (Vol. 18 p. 146) but attentive reading makes it apparent that the salvation in question can be communicated only through encouraging example, e.g. "since the Christian believes in the *God*-man, he also has the courage to believe in himself and in his supreme possibility, the possibility of reaching the absolute God as his own most intimate life" (Vol. 18 p. 224). Why then could it not be maintained that the greater the number of such encouraging *Bodhisattva* figures the better?

Rahner's difficulties clearly stem from his unqualified stress on the incomprehensibility of the Transcendent: unchecked it seems bound to lead to the kind of universalist unitarianism which Jaspers advocates, and from which Rahner does not seem far when he expresses his hostility to what he terms the "indiscriminate speculative interpretations" of certain contemporary theologians concerning the Trinity (Vol. 18 p. 113). Given such opposition to anything which appears to involve ontological theorizing about the "inner" divine nature it seems obviously impossible to sustain the Logos Christology without which there appears to be no hope of remaining loyal to Catholic tradition. So it is not surprising that the term "mythological" is not far from the later Rahner's lips when discussing "descending" Christology (e.g. Vol. 18 p. 148).

This reviewer is impressed by a good deal in Rahner's later theology, particularly his insistence that by "God" we must mean the intractable Mystery which surrounds and sustains us, and which we can never "know", but only either trust or distrust. But does not an act of trust carry with it implicit assumptions about the nature of that which is trusted? Does it make sense to speak of an "act of self-surrendering love trusting entirely in this very incomprehensibility, in which knowledge surpasses itself, rising to its supernature and is aware of itself only by becoming love" (Vol. 18 p. 100) in which it is left an entirely open question as to whether the Transcendent which is trusted and loved can know itself? Does not this imply faith in the divine Logos? Such a "thematization" of the implicit presuppositions of faith could perhaps lead to reasonable affirmations about the "inner" nature of the divine which would nevertheless not amount to claims to assured knowledge. They might, however, make possible the re-appropriation of the "descending" Logos Christology affirmed by the early Rahner without abandoning his later insistence upon the "absolute Mystery" of the divine.

R.M. Burns
Goldsmith's College

Living with Death

Helmut Thielicke. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983. Pp. xi + 208. £9.70.

Thielicke, now professor emeritus of the University of Hamburg, confronted death during the last war and wrote a book *Death and Life* which brought help to survivors also in the English-speaking world. Forty years have passed and the book now under review is virtually a new creation. Even so, Thielicke's Bibliography whilst not unaware of the flood of relevant literature and of the pastoral-clinical work (following Kubler-Ross and others) is amazingly uninformed of standard works, such as John Hick's *Death and Eternal Life.* Nor is there any reference to *Life After Death* with contributions by Toynbee and Koestler et al. This is a pity or possibly an advantage: the author explores his theme as a Lutheran and he restricts his vision to a narrow field.

Nevertheless, even this narrow field is still wide enough. The first survey introduces Death as the problem of Life: to be human we cannot accept existence without meaning. Death is the watchman over our finitude and ends everything, including all our relationships. The author steers his craft over the ocean of our awareness of Death with comments on texts representative of a variety of schools of thought, both ancient and modern. From Plato to Heidegger we follow a path of possible insights, if not solutions which are unacceptable to Protestant dogma. Is Death natural or unnatural? And do you admit the notion of lasting personal (loving or hating) relationships into the area of discussion? The author takes the reader with him into a maze of theories and opinions and it becomes clear at the outset that a gulf divides the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus from Freud or Rilke or the latest voice from the Oakland Medical Centre.

But these and similar voices can only be peripheral, for the phenomenon of dying has very little to do with death. Empirical approaches to the subject count for much less than reflections. Hence Plato and all the outstanding philosophers must dominate the topic, and Thielicke's Chapter III is the longest and central to his conclusions. Plato's natural anthropology divides man into an authentic and inauthentic part, for the soul and only the soul, is *athanatos,* and detached from the body it hastens to its appropriate sphere. This 'principle of division' remains the target of Thielicke's attack. It is also fatally linked to the cyclical concept of time: the psyche takes part in the cyclical movement. As against this idealism stand Nietzsche's immanentism, a freedom for and in death, which may not only validate suicide but regard the act as a noble fulfilment. The author does not refer to Nietzsche's own miserable end (not suicide) nor to Dostoevsky's figure of Kirilov in the *Demons,* who is the very embodiment of the ideal of heroic nihilism. Euthanasia, however, is discussed along the lines which have become accepted among us as reasonable in recent theology (cf. Gordon Dunstan's refutation of euthanasia).

The Biblical view (sic) must be seen in contrast to all natural eschatologies because of the "totality of the I". "Individual existence in its uniqueness is totally different from the stage of pupation from which I emerge to a butterfly state of supraindividual values" (p. 85). Not only

in death and in no other way" (Vol. 18 p. 167). Rahner then shifts without any evident justification to the claim that Jesus' death must be "final" in an eschatological sense, "unsurpassable" in value, "unique" in the sense of not repeatable by other men, and "definitive" in the sense of paradigmatic for all time. But even granted that Jesus's death was "final" and "definitive" *for himself*, and thus exemplary for all mankind, why should he not merely rank as one among many "paradigmatic individuals" as Jaspers maintains? Rahner freely applies exclusive terms to Jesus such as "absolute salvation bringer" (Vol. 18 p. 146) but attentive reading makes it apparent that the salvation in question can be communicated only through encouraging example, e.g. "since the Christian believes in the *God*-man, he also has the courage to believe in himself and in his supreme possibility, the possibility of reaching the absolute God as his own most intimate life" (Vol. 18 p. 224). Why then could it not be maintained that the greater the number of such encouraging *Bodhisattva* figures the better?

Rahner's difficulties clearly stem from his unqualified stress on the incomprehensibility of the Transcendent: unchecked it seems bound to lead to the kind of universalist unitarianism which Jaspers advocates, and from which Rahner does not seem far when he expresses his hostility to what he terms the "indiscriminate speculative interpretations" of certain contemporary theologians concerning the Trinity (Vol. 18 p. 113). Given such opposition to anything which appears to involve ontological theorizing about the "inner" divine nature it seems obviously impossible to sustain the Logos Christology without which there appears to be no hope of remaining loyal to Catholic tradition. So it is not surprising that the term "mythological" is not far from the later Rahner's lips when discussing "descending" Christology (e.g. Vol. 18 p. 148).

This reviewer is impressed by a good deal in Rahner's later theology, particularly his insistence that by "God" we must mean the intractable Mystery which surrounds and sustains us, and which we can never "know", but only either trust or distrust. But does not an act of trust carry with it implicit assumptions about the nature of that which is trusted? Does it make sense to speak of an "act of self-surrendering love trusting entirely in this very incomprehensibility, in which knowledge surpasses itself, rising to its supernature and is aware of itself only by becoming love" (Vol. 18 p. 100) in which it is left an entirely open question as to whether the Transcendent which is trusted and loved can know itself? Does not this imply faith in the divine Logos? Such a "thematization" of the implicit presuppositions of faith could perhaps lead to reasonable affirmations about the "inner" nature of the divine which would nevertheless not amount to claims to assured knowledge. They might, however, make possible the re-appropriation of the "descending" Logos Christology affirmed by the early Rahner without abandoning his later insistence upon the "absolute Mystery" of the divine.

R.M. Burns
Goldsmith's College

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Hegel and Marx, but also Goethe must be excluded from the Christian scheme of things. In the case of Goethe I part company with the author. He identified him with Dr Faustus, as if an author could or should ever be thus identified (Hamlet - Shakespeare!). Goethe is always troublesome to German Protestant theologians and they hardly ever get him right. But since the English reader is probably unaware of the issues, such as the proper definition of *entelechy,* or the status of Faust's redemption in a Dantesque heaven, I must refrain from arguing the case here.

Thielicke fails to deploy the Biblical material in a multi-dimensional manner but rather presents a unified picture of existential Dying outside and beyond the biological sphere. The key word is "personal". The crucial point is "to show how the personal relation of guilt and death is worked out in and behind the death that limits us quantitatively" (pp. 125 f.). Thielicke makes a great deal of concepts such as "limit" and "wrath of God", which certainly transcend the impersonal or mere animal bios. He argues against the mythical character of Time and the false sense of security as well as a tragic understanding of death. These antitheses are designed to buttress the Lutheran identification with the Risen Lord, "to be embraced by his life". Again he insists "justification comes to a climax here", not in Eucharistic union but in *sola scriptura* fellowship.

As I close the book I ask myself why it leaves me quite dissatisfied, apart from matters of style and a few mistakes. I feel uneasy about the existential approach which really denies the principle of ontological immortality. If we do not admit the substantial being of the soul (whether with Plato or the Church Fathers) nor grant merit to the human achievement, Goethe's entelechy, how can we escape from a blunted uniformity in which everything is permitted and everybody is alike? Christian forgiveness comes then pretty near the category of "cheap grace": no one brings anything to God, and God accepts all. But this kind of *apocatastasis* (Hick's universalism) does not even get very far when Lutheran dogmatism restricts the scenario altogether. Moreoever, it is not an interesting one and lacks the pathos, the charm, the *timor mortis,* the wonder aroused by Life to come. Why is it that one Bach Cantata, as Lutheran as you could wish, such as *Der Friede sei mit Dir* or *Es ist genug* or the motet *Jesu meine Freude* opens such a polyphonic immensity that death is truly swallowed up by Life? To ask such a question is not to denigrate a perfectly respectable book but to raise the larger one: how can theologians speak of the unspeakable?

Ulrich Simon

The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in the Central American Revolution

S.C.M. Press, 1984. Pp. 464. £12.50

Philip Berryman's aim in writing 'The Religious Roots of Rebellion' has been to describe and explain how it has come about that Christians have become significant participants in Marxist-led revolutionary movements in Central America, and to reflect upon the issues raised by this participation.

The book opens with a scene-setting section which attempts to give the reader a taste of how the Bible is used in basic Christian communities, quoting extensively from Cardenal's 'The Gospel in Solentiname'. The broad thrust of Latin American liberation theology is then outlined in broad strokes to give a context to what has been depicted in microcosm in Solentiname. A description of the Central American situation follows, providing an overview of the fluid, even chaotic, state of the region, which is both the spur to rebellion and the churches' sphere of pastoral involvement.

The Second Part is a detailed analysis of the historical, political, military and economic situations presently to be found in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, each country being dealt with at length. The author is clearly aware of the complexities of the internal affairs of these states and has the wisdom to include brief summaries of "the story so far" to enable the reader unfamiliar with the machiavellian schemings of the various power sub-groups to maintain a sense of the general drift of events up to the end of 1982. In view of the recent rapid developments in El Salvador and Nicaragua, a section has been added subsequently which brings the happenings up to the end of 1983 to the readers attention; thus, although the United States' involvement in El Salvador and the attempts to destabilise Nicaragua in 1984 are not recounted, this section does provide a very thorough and well-ordered analysis of the internal affairs and external relations of these Central American states.

Berryman is less successful in his description in this section of how the churches (Protestant and Roman Catholic, but predominantly Catholic) are involved in these events. His references to the activities of churchmen and women give the impression that the religious denominations are acting responsively to the national situations rather than being a determinative factor in the direction taken by the liberation movements as a whole. One is left with the feeling that a 'secular' historian could write a complete account of the strivings for self-determination of the oppressed peoples without reference to the churches, and not a great deal would have been omitted. On the other hand, there may be an element of truth here - from within the ecclesiastical world, the whole field of liberation theology has become prominent as a new direction in religious thinking and practice, but to those whose interests lie outside the realm of religion, it probably has very little impact, even in Central America. Berryman admits this: "The basic Christian communities, while very important, are a minority phenomenon . . . For the moment, basic Christian communities are not the dominant expression of Nicaraguan Catholicism . . . " (p.266).

In Part Three, Berryman goes on to reflect on issues which arise from the involvement of the churches in the revolutionary movements of the Central American states. The problem of the ethical questions posed by Christian involvement in violent protest is outlined and dealt with situationally, the author proposing that violence is an allowable response to an unjust, exploitive, inhumane and violent system. To support this, he is keen to adduce favourable opinions from ecclesiastical sources such as the Medellin conference and the Roman Catholic hierarchy,

rather than to wrestle with the problems personally. This chapter is one of the most unsatisfying; in a book which is seeking to reflect on a situation which is rent by violence and death, a place could surely be found for a trenchant theological discussion of the whole issue of the nature of the Christian response to a situation where violence is proposed as a means of achieving ultimate pacification. It is true, as Berryman comments, that the issue of violence is one on which no Central American churchperson has written or reflected extensively, but one might suggest that here an opportunity has been missed for him to rectify that omission.

Far more effective are the following two chapters on the ecclesiological implications of the Central American unrest, outlining how the churches are dealing with the pastoral problems raised thereby, and suggesting ways in which the religious bodies can respond effectively to the needs of the people without compromising their integrity. This is followed by an analysis of some of the main themes with which liberation theology is trying to come to grips. The ones identified are the nature of God in countries where the powers that be act godlessly; the interpretation of sin, conversion and grace in the context of 'structural', political sin where conversion involves structural change, and the centrality of the paschal mystery for Christology, Christ being he who delivers the oppressed from bondage. Eschatology, or the final consummation of the oppressed peoples' hopes, is referred to only briefly and fails to find the prominence that it achieves in the writings of, for example, Gutierrez or Miranda. In this section, Berryman shows tantalisingly that he has the insight to think broadly, almost prophetically, and one regrets that he did not apply this ability to a more full discussion of the ethical problems of violent confrontation.

One or two other general points arise from the book. Berryman frequently quotes 'pro-revolutionary' pronouncements from the (Roman Catholic) church hierarchy as if they are of particular significance for the life of Christians in Central America. He himself comments, however, that only about 15-20% of Catholic clergy support revolution, which leaves the vast majority disinterested or in opposition. Add to this the large scale of illiteracy amongst the peasants of Central America and the general lack of interest in episcopal pronouncements, and the picture of a popular church movement towards revolution becomes significantly toned down. Further add hostile statements (not quoted by Berryman) from at least a proportion of the 75-85% in opposition, and a very subdued portrait emerges.

Berryman is self-contradictory in parts – he claims that " . . . there is no way to "apply" the New Testament directly across twenty centuries to the present day social contexts", (p.310) and yet this is the very method of application which he applauds so warmly in his description of life in basic Christian communities in Solentiname. He goes on to claim that "people who have not actively opposed the violence of the powerful against the poor, at some cost to themselves, have no moral authority to question the violence used by the poor" (p.310), but yet he launches a tirade in the epilogue against nuclear weaponry, a subject which he has no 'moral authority' to speak upon, on his own definition which limits ethical pronouncement to those who are suffering.

Despite these limitations, 'The Religious Roots of Rebellion' is an important contribution to the writings emerging from the Americas. It is one of the very few English language books to give a first-hand, detailed account of the plight of Central American states from economic, political and ecclesiastical or theological points of view, and to attempt to reflect on the issues arising from there. It describes a desperate situation without recourse to hyperbole, and yet sees through that state of despair and flux a prospect for change which will benefit the poor and begin to make present the Kingdom of God.

Nicolas Clough

Science and Religion in the Nineteenth Century

Tess Cosslett (ed.). Cambridge English Prose Texts. Cambridge University Press 1983. Pp. 249. £22.50 hardback, £7.95 paperback.

The magazine "Nature" was first published in 1869, and the launching of this new periodical devoted to scientific topics may be seen as symptomatic of a growing cultural divide between science and the arts. Increasingly, the major scientific works were no longer reviewed by leading scientists in the quarterlies. To us, today, a book of scientific extracts for use by English students seems an anomaly, but we would do well to remember that our Victorian literary giants had no such compartmentalised minds. Indeed, in the evenings George Eliot and George Lewes used to read books aloud on phrenology and physiology. If this book of extracts helps to introduce student of Victorian literature to the authors and texts which so exercised the minds of their heroes, then it will have served a valuable purpose.

The book will, of course, also be of service to theological students. Tess Cosslett has selected 9 pieces (by William Paley, Robert Chambers, Hugh Miller, Charles Darwin (2), Leonard Huxley, John Tyndall and Frederick Temple); as the cover says, these texts are commonly unavailable in suitable editions – Darwin's being the exception. She has wisely gone for a few long extracts, rather than a plethora of piecemeal paragraphs. Each has a short introduction and copious notes, both valuable, although for my money I would have preferred it the other way around, for the introduction seldom does justice to the subjects covered and the notes (albeit clear, informative and displaying an obvious grasp of the literature) can descend to a Who's Who of Victorian England. As with a box of chocolates, it is easy to be critical of the selection. Not that Paley, Chambers et al. are unpalatable, rather one misses certain favourites. I was surprised at the omission of anything by Charles Lyell, saddened that the only words of Thomas Huxley are some from his diary as edited by his son. Admittedly the diary extract concerns the Wilberforce-Huxley duel, but (as Coslett herself points out) this 'battle' has been transfigured into a myth and was hardly national news at the time. One of Huxley's reviews of The Origin would have been more valuable, not only as a mirror of mid-century attitudes but for their grand English style: "Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules."

In her useful introductory essay Dr. Cosslett examines the sources of conflict between science and religion. The analysis is focused on natural theology and the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution; understandable for a short essay on the 19th century, but I cannot help feeling that insufficient attention is given to the geological sciences. These (earlier) controversies may have left Paleyian theology intact, but they did initiate discussion on God's relationship to Creation – as absentee landlord or interfering magician – and debates over whether invoking final causes was scientifically valid. The 'catastrophists' are too readily branded as attempting to produce harmonies of Genesis and geology, whereas many saw no need to relate natural facts with Revelation and were driven to catastrophism by the fossils themselves.

Concerning the origins of conflict, she has little to say on the popular reactions to the new ideas, even less on the theory that some scientists were anti-clerical in a bid to gain cultural dominance. In her view, the battles were largely intellectual: for a scientific method free from the demands of natural theology, for Truth in contrast to superstition. The response of the Broad Church was to define religion in terms of inner spiritual conviction, so making historical and scientific attacks irrelevant. That of the Tractarians was either to ignore science or, with Newman, to separate Revelation from inductive science as two ways of knowing. The attitude of 'fundamentalist' evangelicals is highlighted with the views of Dean Cockburn of York, but there is nothing on the way some orthodox Christians quite readily come to terms with Darwin, and indeed hailed him as setting natural theology on a firmer foundation. This is a pity since, as some argue, it was they and not the Broad Church who found most affinity with the new science. The liberals may have advocated evolution, but not as described by Darwin. In the end, Dr. Coslett's conclusion is positive: Darwinian science may have showed up the inadequacies in 18th century natural theology, but it forced theologians to "rethink their faith in a more profound, spiritual, and sometimes traditional way."

Similarly, my overall conclusion is positive. Libraries are not so well stocked with 19th century scientific treatises as with the novels based around them. This is a useful collection, made more so by Tess Coslett's notes and the introductions which set the texts within contexts. I hope that within the minds of both English and Theology students this will prevent the dismissal of Victorian theologians as 'strangled snakes'!

Vernon Blackmore

Creature and Creator: Myth-making and English Romanticism

Paul Cantor. Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. 220. £19.50

Professor Cantor's case-study of English Romanticism concentrates on the inter-relation of philosophy and literature, throwing light on the range, depth and complexity of romantic myth-making. However, his clear and fascinating approach has important implications for theology, as well as for English literature, especially with regard to the meaning and status of myth in theological language.

Starting with Rousseau's re-thinking of human origins in his *Second Discourse*, Cantor traces a new philosophical awareness which the romantics were to develop, rightly reminding us that romanticism is not simply concerned with poetic creation and forms but with deep philosophical isues about human origins and destiny and a vision of life. At the outset, he notes the unorthodox bias of romantic creation myths (perhaps notably in Blake), seeing these as a development of Rousseau's philosophy and as an inversion of orthodox Christian myths of creation. Orthodox notions of God are inverted in romantic myths and Cantor regards these developments as parallels to tendencies in the history of religion which go by the name of gnosticism. Cantor insists that the romantic creation myths as a genre stands not simply for a distinctive voice in literature, but for a distinctive, indeed new, conception of human nature. In the hands of romantics such as Blake and Shelley, these myths provide a revolutionary reply to religious conservatism and the social order which it sanctions in its myths of origins. In short, romantic myth-making provides a critique of an orthodox Christian view of life, values, society and authority. Cantor believes that the romantics take up Rousseau's philosophical challenge, stressing the fundamental contradictions of the human condition, the insolubility of the problem of evil and the lack of civilisation, reason and passion, individual and society, are forged into a romantic vision of the world which is at once creative and tragic, the outcome of a failure to reconcile these tensions into a higher all-embracing synthesis.

Cantor offers us a number of case studies of romantic myth-making, all of which take up the theme of man learning to assume or internalise, the traditional prerogatives of God. He focuses on Blake's *The Book of Urizen* and the *Four Zoas*, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbowed*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Byron's *Cain* and Keats' *Hyperion* poems. These works explore the remaking of man's consciousness in uniting the functions of creator and creative in man himself. The dark side to human creativity is then traced in the rise of nightmare visions, loneliness, tragic suffering and the creative isolated ego, as reflected in *Frankenstein*, *Cain*, and the *Hyperion* poems. Perhaps Keats comes across as the most sceptical yet steadfast poet who, in maintaining his poetic vigil, acquires a painful but quietly noble vision of man's fallen condition without looking to the gods for a vision of a higher destiny for man.

In learning how to come to terms with creativity and tragedy, faith and stark realism, Cantor notes, in his case studies, a gradual cutting back of the apocalyptic element in those myths, whether a better or higher state for man was believed to be realisable in the emergence of nobler social and political structures or internalised in creative and artistic awareness. A mixture of the two and a growing disillusionment with apocalyptic hopes altogether can be seen in Cantor's selection of creation myths, as they proceed from Blake and Shelley, at one end, to Byron and Keats, at the other. Cantor believes that in Byron and Keats we have an acceptance of the human condition and almost an internalising of apocalyptic to the point where one is able to maintain a poetic vigil in which one inhabits a painful but wise fallen world. Progress becomes perpetual process and a vision of eternity is marked only by endless change. Cantor sees in romantic myth-makers a return to Rousseau, but a return which issues in a new creativity in man that is remarkably prophetic, if one can look beyond what may appear to be a failed vision.

Cantor's very clear presentation of English romantic myth-making seeks to give romanticism a serious philosophical basis from which to revolutionise man's consciousness of the human condition. But by pointing to religious gnostic parallels to romantic creations (which seek to invert and internalise orthodox religious myths) and by tracing a gradual reduction of apocalyptic hope for a better world or a higher synthesis of man's tragic condition, he is at least implicitly challenging the coherence of theological statements which are barely credible unless they are grounded in myth and appeal to apocalyptic for their vindication. But then how can Christian theology give an account of itself which is substantially different from romanticism? Perhaps this is one of the challenges which Cantor's book presents to the reader whose interests are theological as well as literary and philosophical.

Martin Roberts

God so loved the Third World

Thomas D. Hanks. Orbis Press, 1983. Pp. xviii+152. $8.95

The amount of material written in Latin America and made available in this country continues to grow, and often important new perspectives on biblical teaching are opened up thereby. So it is with this book, which has two sub-titles, which together say a good deal about its purpose and character. On the cover we find 'The Bible, the Reformation, and Liberation Theologies', and this sets out clearly the three principal sources of inspiration; on the title page the sub-title is 'The Biblical Vocabulary of Oppression', which gives an indication of the contents. The author is a conservative evangelical, yet the lessons he draws are uncompromisingly radical. Indeed, it is only from such a background that the impact achieved would be possible.

The first part of the book consists largely of series of texts dealing with oppression and poverty. Ten Hebrew roots of particular importance are identified, and the texts are then allowed to speak for themselves without critical questions about sources and origin being raised. They would in any case be irrelevant to the issues being discussed. Hanks is able to show in a remarkable way how the two themes are linked. The suggestion that poverty is simply inevitable, or a form of punishment, is shown to be a profoundly unbiblical one; oppression is the basic cause of poverty, and the poor are (or should be) the basic concern of the church and of each Christian community.

At various points it would be possible to challenge Hank's exegesis, but this scarcely seems to matter: his main case is made out with overwhelmingly detailed support. The question now is whether his plea will be heard in the USA and this country; and if heard, acted upon.

Richard Coggins

The Anglican Tradition

Edited by Richard Holloway. Mowbray, 1984. Pp. v + 106. £3.25.

As part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Oxford Movement – and also, incidentally, of the centenary of the Church of the Advent, Boston, U.S.A. where he was the Rector – the Reverend Richard Holloway arranged a series of five lectures dealing with various aspects of Anglicanism. It is these lectures which are here made available in book form.

Richard Holloway himself contributes the introduction entitled 'Anglicanism: a Church adrift?', in which he considers the present state of affairs as not so different from that of July 1833 when John Keble accused England of 'National Apostasy'. We have, he says, to establish once again the truth of the Church's divine nature: 'The Church exists primarily, not to make us good or to improve the world or to uphold the state or even to overthrow it, but to witness to the adorable, objective reality of God and to give him praise'.

In the following chapter Professor John Macquarrie discusses the various attempts made in official reports drawn up by the Commission on Christian Doctrine, and by individuals as diverse as Cranmer, Lancelot Andrewes, Pusey and Stephen Sykes to set forth the doctrinal position of the Anglican Church in accordance with its ideal of the *via media*. His hope is that the authentic spirit of this *via media* will remain a strong influence among the present conflicting movements, and thus ensure the continuance of a Christian theology which is both rooted in the biblical witness and true to catholic tradition.

Marion Hackett, who is Professor of Liturgics and Music at the University of the South, Tennessee, contributes the longest chapter entitled 'The Anglican Liturgical Tradition', and within the compass of twenty-nine pages manages to compress a great deal of valuable material, starting with the First Prayer Book of 1549 and ending with a brief review of the 1979 American revision.

Perhaps because in recent years so much has been written on 'The Anglican Spiritual Tradition', I found Martin Thornton's contribution bearing this title slightly disappointing. Not only is it shorter than the other chapters, but it lacks notes and bibliography, which is surprising in view of the amount of material on the subject currently available.

The final chapter, which stands apart from the rest, is a fresh assessment of that work by the historian of the Oxford Movement, Richard Church, the first edition of which appeared as long ago as 1891. To those who, like myself, were brought up to regard Church's *The Oxford Movement* as one of the finest accounts of those stirring events – my tutor at King's used to refer to it as still 'a great book' and to point out that its author had been intimately acquainted with many of the leading personalities involved – it may come as something of a shock to be presented with the real facts of which Owen Chadwick makes us aware in his brilliant and penetrating essay.

Gordon Huelin

A Dictionary of Religious Education

Edited by John Sutcliffe. S.C.M. Press, 1984. Pp. xvi + 376. £14.95.

To attempt a Dictionary covering such a vast, and in some places almost-uncharted, field is certainly courageous and possibly foolhardy. John Sutcliffe, his planning group, and over two hundred contributors from many disciplines and four continents, have tackled the task intelligently and it is hard to fault them on comprehensiveness. (One rare omission concerns University Departments of Education; we are directed to 'Higher Education', but nowhere is it mentioned that P.G.C.E. and Higher Degree courses are available in Religious Education in the Universities).

The Dictionary aims to give information, to summarise ideas and to suggest further reading. Much of the first aim must be taken on trust; the second is rather more difficult; – who, for example, can write a definitive statement on 'Aims of R.E. in L.E.A. Schools' which satisfies everyone? The reading lists are uneven; one book only for 'Sacred Places', ten for 'Sacred Books', none for 'Heroes', 'Values Education', 'Voluntary Schools' and 'Peace Studies'. The same recommended reading crops up in several places, but reasonably so.

One could cavil and criticize endlessly, but the final judgement must be based on experience. The Dictionary is already an indispensable part of this Religious Education Department's equipment, and (the ultimate accolade) may be consulted but *never* borrowed.

Enid B. Mellor