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# KING'S

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**KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW**

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# THE GOD OF THE DOCTRINE COMMISSION. A CRITIQUE OF *WE BELIEVE IN GOD*<sup>1</sup>

KEITH WARD

It is a rare event in the Church of England for all the members of a doctrine commission to agree; not only to agree, but to be so unanimous that “all are prepared to stand behind every sentence of the text” (ix). One has heard of theologians who do not appear to believe in an “objective metaphysical God”; and so it is especially reassuring to find that what all the members of the commission are agreeing about is God. The concept of God is one of the most contentious and disputable in the history of human thought, and one could hardly have looked for such a degree of agreement in advance. In fact, the theological archeologist can find traces of quite profound disagreements which have been quickly buried. One such trace is evident in the Chairman’s preface, where he remarks that belief in an impassible God has been discarded. One suspects that the Chairman would like it to have been discarded; but the body of the text does not support the claim that it has been, in any sense in which it has been seriously held by Christian theologians.

Nevertheless, the doctrine that God suffers, which even Cyril of Alexandria, that staunch defender of impassibility, accepted, is certainly given a new prominence in the report, and I shall consider it later. A second statement which leaps out of the preface to confront the critical eye is that “God can be known only from within a response of loving obedience to his call” (viii). Of course, one must distinguish between knowing *that* there is a God, and knowing God by acquaintance. But here, perhaps, is another concealed dispute, between those who reject the project of natural theology, and appeal to revelation, understood in the sense of direct personal address; and others who might give greater place to argument, understood in a fairly wide sense. In the finished report, pride of place goes to the idea of a personalist God who calls us to obedient love. The tradition is a very English (or perhaps British) one, rooted in the personalism of H. H. Farmer and John Baillie, with further philosophical roots in the peculiarly British reinterpretation of the categorical imperative as a directly intuited demand of duty, which one finds in such writers as Kemp Smith.

It is worth noting that this is a rather localised interpretation of the idea of God in Christian tradition. The whole Thomist tradition, rooted securely in the Alexandrian Fathers, is scarcely mentioned. Other 20th century attempts to revise this idea, as in Process theology and in post-Positivist linguistic philosophy, are not seriously canvassed either. Whether one considers this a lack or an advantage probably depends on how obvious some form of theistic personalism seems. At any rate, one should note the primacy given to a personal-relationship model of Divine-human encounter in the report; and its reliance on a form of direct personal intuition, or religious experience, to ground its doctrine of God.

A great deal of the report is concerned with the question of how God makes himself known in revelation.

It is surely in order for a group of Anglican theologians to take the Bible as authoritative; but the sense they give to this authority is interesting. The tone is set by the statement that “If Christianity believes that God has revealed himself through the medium of human speech . . . then it cannot look for fixed, normative and universally agreed doctrine” (5). This is wholly different in tone from typical Roman Catholic statements, which insist precisely on irreformable normative doctrines, rooted in the *depositum fidei*. The Anglican statement is in one sense trivially obvious – that people will disagree on the interpretation of any set of words. But taken in another sense, it expresses a rather startling doctrine – that a verbal revelation from God is inherently incapable of conveying normative doctrines. The argument seems to be that, because a text may be interpreted in various ways, it can have no fixed core of meaning. “Revelation may be less of a fixed point than it appears” (10). It is stressed how much reason and experience affect how a text is read; and indeed, in chapter 2, interpretation of experience is said to have preceded the writing of the text. It is already imbued with rational interpretation; so the real locus of revelation turns out to be, not the text itself, but the interpreted personal experiences which preceded it and led to its writing.

All concepts, it is said, about God *as about anything else*, are necessarily incomplete, provisional, approximate and corrigible (25). Again, this statement seems to vacillate between the trivial and the breathtaking. It is trivial, if it means that no proposition gives an exhaustive description of an object in all possible respects, and that any proposition may be mistaken. It is startling, if it means that statements such as “This chair is brown” are so incomplete that someone else may say, “This chair is green”, without contradicting it. It does not follow from our limited knowledge that we do not know anything with certainty, or that we can never make any literally and simply true statements.

In the case of God, what is said to happen is that “there is One who makes a demand upon” persons. This demand requires interpretation; but it is objective, not a product of imagination. It is modelled in corrigible concepts, and then tested through time by a community, which accepts these models as appropriate to those characteristic experiences. There is a tension apparent here between a firm desire to be objective about God – “What God truly is, is what constrains and sets a limit on our approximate language about him” (33); and an emphasis on language being a set of “procedures for enabling us to think about the unobservable” (27). There are “points of discernment”, which may call for using many different images; yet there are limits on what is appropriate. The tension is one that is found in pronounced form in the work of Ian Ramsey, who uses the word “God” to mark the occurrence of disclosure-situations; but refuses to describe God except as the “more” which is there disclosed. There is something paradoxical in being certain that something more and objectively existent is disclosed, when one cannot describe what it is. Now the report apparently insists that some descriptions of God are available – perhaps this marks the advance of Mitchell over Ramsey. But there is still something odd about anyone apprehending the unobservable.

Perhaps we have again touched upon a hidden disagreement which does not quite surface, between those who would stress the *via negativa*, the abandonment of all concepts descriptive of God, and those who attribute personal attributes fairly directly to God, who can be apprehended much as other persons are. The latter view certainly predominates in the report. "The use of metaphors . . . about God is controlled . . . by theism as a metaphysical theory"(43). Strangely, however, the metaphysical theory is never more than hinted at. It seems to rely on the idea of God as a disembodied person, known in experience by a relationship of trust and openness. Vague gestures are made in the direction of other religions, of feminine language to describe God, and of various problems about Divine action in the world. But it cannot be said that they are taken seriously. A serious consideration of Buddhism, Vedanta or Islam, for example, might have led to a greater qualification of personalist imagery. And it is rather blithely assumed that patterns of divine behaviour can be observed in the world, even though the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford is unable to find them. This may all seem unduly critical of a work of this nature; surely we do not want to inflict Maurice Wiles on our rural congregations? But the trouble is that the personalist view, so firmly rooted in the scriptural testimony of a specific community to the truth of many personal apprehensions of Divine action and demand, exposes its own weaknesses with ruthless abandon.

In ch. 14, it is said that "Scripture is . . . the distillation of perceptions of the reality of God which came to a worshipping community under the impact of particular historical events . . ." (54). The process is long and complex. First, events, prophecies or enacted laws; then their impact on a community; then a communal apprehension of God, partly caused by those events; then a distillation of this perception; and finally, I suppose, an editing of various such distillations into the canon of Scripture. A remarkable thing about the report is that it accepts overtly and without qualification a critical view of Scripture. It is noted that Scripture contains contradictions; that Jesus' first followers were mistaken in expecting a Divine intervention in history; that many events reported as historical – such as the rending of the temple veil in Mark – are symbolic, and did not really happen; and that it is virtually impossible to say where God's involvement in history begins and where it ends (61). God is nevertheless said to be the subject of a historical narrative which sets out his character and his nature as involved in the temporal flow of history. To paraphrase this view unkindly, what we are offered is the picture of an agent who cannot be identified, in a story whose beginning and end are both fictional and whose intermediate stages as narrated are too neatly schematised to be true to life. Yet this story is said to tell the truth about God.

When so much is admitted to be false, how can such a narrative be a source of truth? At this point, recourse is made again to the restricted nature of our language and imagery. The models are said to be valid "up to a point", and to express at least partly mistaken views about the coherence of history and the nature of God's moral demands (as in the command to exterminate

Amalekites). What, then, is the criterion for acceptability? It should be a metaphysical theory, we have been told. Unfortunately, the theory is one that identifies God as an agent involved in history, and apprehended as such by a line of prophets or by a worshipping community in Israel. Two major questions now arise: why is non-Hebrew apprehension of the Divine virtually ignored? Could only the Hebrews identify God as a historical agent? Did he only act in the Middle East? How can one explain the particularity of this revelatory tradition? Secondly, while Jesus, like many teachers, may widen the field of understanding of the Divine, why should he be given finality and unique authority? He is said to have had an exceptional degree of personal knowledge of God; to have had a uniquely intimate relationship with God. But it is hard to see how such beliefs about Jesus could possibly be supported by any evidence. When it seems that even an objective resurrection is disputable, claims about Jesus' innermost awareness of God are hardly to be given a greater degree of probable truth.

It may seem that I am writing this assessment as an affronted fundamentalist; but that is not the case. I am seeking to draw attention to what I believe to be a fundamental discrepancy in some contemporary Christian theology. That is, that advanced critical positions are adopted without their proper consequences being drawn. At key points, traditional views are asserted which no longer have an intelligible place in a critical approach. I have focussed briefly on two related issues – the way in which a very personalist and intuitionist account of God is combined with the belief that all images are inadequate and that the Divine is unknowable; and the way in which a rather sceptical approach to the historical accuracy of the Biblical records is combined with an acceptance of certain particularly recondite and irretrievable truths about the uniqueness of Jesus' awareness of God. Thus it is said that "it is impossible to do more than provide a tentative reconstruction" of the life and understanding of Jesus (87). Yet vast claims are made that the object of this tentative reconstruction is "the embodiment of the Word of God" (96). It is all the more odd when it is said that "the God whom Jesus proclaimed was a God whose intervention in history was imminent" (83). This intervention did not occur; yet that failure is said not to render the concept invalid, because the early church was able to interpret the whole life of Jesus as part of the final intervention of God. But is Jesus' conception of himself important? Or is all that matters what the early church came to think of him? The report exemplifies a three-stage process in the interpretation of Jesus. First, is the idea of Jesus as the agent of the Kingdom, with a Messianic role "in some sense". Next, comes the idea of Jesus as expressing God's nature on earth and as securing forgiveness of sins by his death. And third, is the fully-fledged Trinitarian doctrine of inclusion in a cosmic Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But once one allows so much development of interpretation, so much legendary or myth-making accretion, so much admission of error and culturally limited perception in Jesus and the apostles, how can one be justified in saying, for instance, that Jesus himself had a new and uniquely close relationship with God? And how important is it to say that?

The problem seems to me acute. If the Scriptures were infallibly protected from error, one might be able to say that God himself shows himself to be self-giving love, suffering love, in Jesus. But if they are so uncertain, how can they provide privileged information about God himself? Must one not simply say that such ideas of God arose in the community which came into being after Jesus' death? That it is unjustifiable to project them back onto an unrecoverable historical person, and unnecessary to do so? The whole tenor of the report's treatment of revelation tends in the latter direction; but the conclusion is never bluntly drawn. For if it were, it would be apparent that God does not *in fact* disclose his nature by particular historical acts. And then the underlying idea of God as calling people to respond to his voice would be so dehistoricised and dematerialised that it would no longer have a uniquely authoritative place among the world's very varied images of the Ultimately Real.

I am suggesting that the idea of God espoused by the report is, by the logic of its own argumentation, a rather restricted one, based on foundations which cannot give it a position of special authority. This point emerges forcefully in considering the treatment of the Trinity. A fascinating attempt is made to ground a doctrine of the Trinity in the experience of prayer. It is doomed to fail. "Does a deepening relationship to God in prayer . . . allow one to remain satisfied with a simple undifferentiated monotheism?", the report asks. Jews and Muslims would unhesitatingly answer, "Yes". To justify a negative answer, a very complex idea of prayer as God's conversation with himself, in which people are caught up, is developed. I am not able to comment much on this, except to remark that it sounds remarkably like parts of Hegel. The report itself notes the lack of feminine imagery in the tradition, and does not seem clear as to whether it is Christ or the Spirit who prays within and through us. An observer might well think that this is only *one* experience of prayer, and that even it does not really produce the Christian Trinity, with its triad of persons who differ "only in number and relation"(105). The experiential foundations are too weak for such a grand doctrine; and the restriction to one tradition, with only a token nod in the direction of other faiths, seems slightly myopic.

Still, the Christian doctrine of God *is* distinctive; and one main feature the report stresses is that of the cross, as showing the suffering of God with his creatures. This is a popular theme these days; and perhaps I could end with a few words about it. The Church Fathers generally agreed that God suffered, in his human nature. But they refused to mitigate Divine omnipotence. God may restrain the exercise of his power; but he could never be weak, and it was never remotely possible for him to suffer defeat. There are stray remarks in the report which suggest a temptation to deny omnipotence. On the cross, God is said at one point to endure "in patient weakness", and come "perilously close to defeat"(121). In the final chapter, the model of a saviour-king is recommended, and it is commented that "it is not by the will of the king that poverty and oppression exist"(149). Then another model, of a sculptor, is canvassed; one who reaches out towards a vision not yet fully formulated, who is constrained by the nature of his material. All these remarks picture a God who does his best with very

recalcitrant material; the ghost of Whitehead almost materialises. But he is driven off at the last moment; God is said to choose the material too, and his victory is assured. All these remarks are tantalising in the extreme; but it is clear that the main image of God being recommended is of a sensitive, persuasive, loving, suffering and sympathetic person. That may be a pleasing image to have; but does it really make it any easier to understand how *such* a God could have freely chosen to bring into existence so much pain and sadness, for himself as well as for his creatures? Where is the savagery, the judgment, the terror of the God who is a consuming fire and an invincible destroyer? Perhaps we are better off without him. But at least he seemed to fit in with most human experiences of the world better than the tremendously sympathetic Divine artist who carefully shapes our lives around so much distress.

I end with an apology for seeming to be so terribly negative. That is a besetting sin of my profession. The report in fact contains many good things. Its full acceptance of critical scholarship; its emphasis on the objectivity of the Divine being; its stress on the multiplicity of images for speaking of God; and its presentation of a God of suffering and redeeming love seem to me of very great value. What I have perhaps really done in this short paper is to set out my own perplexities, as I have found them mirrored in the text. Perhaps it is true, however, that this is a very Anglican report – expressing enormous sympathy and tolerance, while at the same time remaining wedded to a slightly restrictive and comfortably civilised idea of a very decently sympathetic God.

It is pleasant to know that the doctrine commission believes in God. Perhaps the God they believe in, however, is just too vague, sentimental and well-meaning to be wholly credible either in terms of the total Biblical witness or of the world in which most human beings live. I do wish that what they said was true; but then I suffer from sentimentality myself.

#### FOOTNOTE

1. *We Believe in God. A Report by the Doctrine Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England.* London: Church House Publishing, 1987. Professor Ward wishes it to be made known that the paper was not written on his own initiative, but commissioned as a contribution to the Cheyneygates Seminar. The paper is being published at the request of the *King's Theological Review*.

## BAPTISTS AND THE TRACTARIAN EUCHARIST: A STUDY IN OPPOSITES

MICHAEL WALKER

The rise of the Tractarians and Ritualists in the Church of England and the revival of English Roman Catholicism during the 19th century, inevitably focussed the attention of all Christians on the Lord's table and what took place there. Through the eyes of 19th century baptists, a view shared by most of their evangelical contemporaries, the precious ground gained by the protestant reformation was in danger of being lost to the advancing cause of catholic Christianity. Amongst evangelicals as a whole there was, as Geoffrey Best reminds us, a widespread repugnance against Roman doctrine and influence:

... feelings about Rome, ranging from cultivated distaste to deep and genuine horror, were shared by most of the Protestant public, and the Church of England Evangelicals . . .<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this universal distaste, fuelled no doubt by tribal memories and polemical distortion, the doctrinal priorities of the evangelicals, stressing as they did conversion, the ascendancy of the Word over sacraments and the centrality of faith, were at variance with those of catholicism.<sup>2</sup> The baptists' reaction to the catholic revival was not, then, a single example of an exclusive and aggressive protestantism. Their feelings on many issues were shared by evangelicals of all denominational persuasions. Apart from events at home, developments in Rome itself served to heighten their fears. The publication of the *Syllabus of Errors* by Pius IX in 1864 and the definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council did not provide a climate conducive to the interment of old quarrels or a dispassionate appraisal of dissenting beliefs in response to the undoubtedly renewing influence of the Tractarian movement. Rather, evangelicals felt it essential to widen the already yawning gulf between their own beliefs and what was coming out of Rome and, consequently, to distance themselves from what they saw as Roman influence in the teaching of the Tractarians.

Central to the catholic revival was a renewal of emphasis on the centrality of the Christian eucharist. At the opening of the 19th century, baptists had taken a predominantly Calvinist view of the sacrament, or "ordinance" as they more often referred to it. By the end of the century, largely in reaction to the catholic revival, their opinions ranged from an attenuated Zwinglianism to a radical suspicion of sacramentalism in any form. Three areas of debate in particular reveal their own position. First, the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament; secondly, in what sense the Lord's Supper was to be understood as a "means of grace"; thirdly, the distinction between two poles in religion which they designated as the "ceremonial" and the "spiritual".

### I

**The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.** On the fourth Sunday after Easter in 1843, E. B. Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew and canon in the University of

Oxford, preached his notable sermon in the university Church of Christ on the subject "The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent". The sermon, whilst not representing the full flowering Pusey's thought, set down a marker in eucharistic theology and attracted a good deal of attention, not least from amongst evangelicals. Amongst those who wrote pamphlets setting out to refute Pusey's arguments, was the minister of the New Road Baptist Church in Oxford, the Revd. B. Godwin, D.D.

The structure of his pamphlet *An Examination of the Principles and Tendencies of Dr. Pusey's Sermon on the Eucharist* was largely determined by the shape of Pusey's sermon. The themes dealt with were to be themes over which debate was to continue and to which other baptist writers were to give their attention during the coming decades. For all its length and erudition, Pusey's sermon was intended to serve the pastoral purpose of enabling Christians to find forgiveness for their sins in the holy eucharist. Like earlier Caroline divines, notably amongst them Lancelot Andrewes, Pusey based his doctrine of Christ's presence in the eucharist on the model of Christ's earthly incarnation. Through his descent into human life, Christ had indissolubly united his human flesh with his divine life. It is both this "flesh" and the divine life that are present in the bread and wine of the eucharist:

... such is undoubted Catholic teaching and the most literal import of Holy Scripture, and the mystery of the Sacrament, that the Eternal Word, Who is God, having taken to him our flesh and joined it indissolubly with Himself, and so, where His flesh is, there He is, and we receiving it, receive Him, and receiving Him are joined on to Him through His flesh to the Father, and He dwelling in us, dwell in Him, and with Him in God.<sup>3</sup>

Because Christ was inseparable from the flesh and blood he had taken into heaven, then, his presence in the eucharist could not be merely figurative. To receive bread and wine after consecration was to receive the body and blood of him who was present in the sacrament. Christ was "truly and really present".

Godwin, in reply, argued that the "emblems are emblems", they were "outward and visible signs", adapted to bring before the mind important truths. Where they were received by believers "the blessings resulting from the Saviour's death" were enjoyed.<sup>4</sup> Pusey, he claimed, had argued for something immensely different from this:

... the elements on being consecrated have undergone a stupendous change, and are now literally, though without losing their natural substance, the very body and blood of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

As Godwin rightly saw, Pusey had argued for something other than transubstantiation, his view approximating more closely to the Caroline use of the Chalcedonian model. Far from destroying the substance of bread and wine, the body and blood of the divine Lord are joined to them in a mystery as profound as the incarnation itself. Against this, Godwin voiced a similar Calvinist objection:

. . . the literal sense supposes the body of Christ at once in heaven and on earth, at thousands of miles distance, and in thousands of places, at the same moment of time.<sup>6</sup>

Godwin here resorted to a conception of the body of Christ that was to dog the baptist response to catholic sacramental teaching. A heaven which can be located in terms of linear distance from the earth, or a body that can be in one place but not another cannot be described as spiritual realities. They are locked in spatio-temporal locations from which they derive their identity. Calvin had argued against Luther's concept of ubiquity on the grounds that the humanity of the ascended Lord was seated at the right hand of God and so could not be in countless other places at the same time. Luther, it can be claimed, had anticipated the objection by deploying the Christological doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The humanity of Christ is universally present in the sacrament because his humanity shares in his divinity. The humanity is omnipresent because the divinity is, by definition, omnipresent. However, it is the nature of the glorified humanity of Jesus, not its ubiquity, that stalks the various attempts to relate the humanity of Jesus to his presence in the sacrament. For Lutherans or tractarians there was a pressing need for an exact definition of the humanity which Jesus took with him into heaven. Pusey made the incarnation central, laying a scent that Godwin and others followed hungrily. If Christ has taken into heaven the body, blood and bones which were seen and handled in Galilee then indeed sacramental theology must face an insuperable problem. If, however, the *terminus ad quem* of the incarnation is placed at the ascension of Christ then it can be argued that a change had occurred in Christ's body. It belonged to that order described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, the order of incorruption, imperishability, glory and strength raised out of corruption, perishability, dishonour and weakness. The post-resurrection body of Jesus was substantial but dispensable, his own but recognized by others only with difficulty. It is *this* incarnate body, now risen and glorified, that is at the heart of the eucharistic mystery.

If the real presence of Christ in the sacrament is understood in terms of the risen and glorified body of the Lord then a key is provided to the eucharistic dialectic between substantial and spiritual. Pusey and other catholics insisted on a "real Presence" in order to signify that what was given in the Lord's Supper was neither simply a projection of the communicant's faith nor a consequence of the exercise of a devout imagination. Christ's presence was centred in the bread and wine, not in the pious disposition of the believing communicant. At the same time, this substantial presence is spiritual, in the sense that the risen and glorified body of Jesus is both substantial and spiritual. However, it belongs to an order of reality that can related to the physical world only by analogy, as in the Pauline distinction between material entities that have bodies compatible with the order of which they are a part and the resurrection body which belongs to the new order of the kingdom of God. The resurrection body of Jesus was really and substantially present in the Upper Room, occupying space and perceived in time; the same Risen Christ who met Paul on the road to Damascus was real and substantial, i.e. he

spoke, he was perceived in that moment of time and yet, it would seem, he did not occupy space. It is that risen and glorified body, clearly identifiable with the Incarnate Lord, that provides the model for our understanding of the Lord's presence in the eucharist.

It was the "localized" presence of Christ, implicit in the belief in his substantial presence in the sacrament, that was a stumbling block for Godwin and those who followed him. If the flesh and blood of Christ were given in the eucharist then Christ's body was on the altar, in the priest's hand, in the communicant's mouth and divided between the chalice and the plate.<sup>7</sup>

Godwin was not prepared to be reconciled to the notion of the real presence by recourse to its essential mystery. All catholic theologians would have claimed that their eucharistic doctrines provided not factual descriptions of what happened at the altar but attempts at unfolding a mystery as profound as the incarnation and resurrection. Godwin discounted the appeal to mystery as nothing more than an excuse to jettison reason:

Almighty power is never exercised but under the direction of infinite wisdom, that to suppose it capable of doing that which is contradictory or absurd is to impute imperfection to a Being infinitely perfect.<sup>8</sup>

He insisted that Pusey had invested the eucharist with "awful mystery" which could only be maintained if some "change" was being argued for. No such mystery existed if it was accepted that

. . . the only change in the elements is their separation from an ordinary to a religious use, that the only sense in which they are the body and blood of Christ is figurative, that the only "real presence" is "in the heart and soul of the communicant, and that the only participation is a reception by faith of the benefits of that death and passion which are set forth."<sup>9</sup>

Godwin believed that it was his interpretation, not Pusey's, that carried the authority of the English reformers. When they

. . . speak of a real participation in the body and blood of the Lord, of a real presence, of the body and blood of Christ being "verily taken and received", strong as the terms are, they mean only a spiritual reception of Christ, by faith, as our Saviour, and a participation in consequence, of the benefits of his death.<sup>10</sup>

He quoted the Communion Service, averring that it taught there is "literally no presence of the actual body of Christ in the sacrament", and further supported his argument with quotations from Cranmer, Hooker ("The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood, is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament") and Jeremy Taylor.<sup>11</sup>

Although his central purpose was to repudiate Pusey's concept of the body of Christ present in the sacrament, Godwin does not himself emerge as a thorough-going memorialist. Given the unresolved problem of the



difference between Christ's incarnate humanity prior to the resurrection and his glorified body after it, with the corollary problem of the exact nature of a "substantial" presence, Godwin affirmed that what was perceived, given and received in the eucharist was "spiritual". This, however, did not lessen his conviction that *something* was given. A Christ who was "spiritually" present was no less "truly and really" present, to the eye of faith and contemplation, than was a Christ who was "substantially" present. Faith was crucial to our knowledge of God, as much at the Holy Table as in the secular paths of daily discipleship. Godwin avoided turning the sacrament into an *aide-memoire* in which the believer's psychological experience was central. Christ was present in the heart. Participation in the sacrament was a participation in the death and passion of the Lord. When he later came to deal with the eucharistic teaching of 1 Corinthians 10, Godwin declared that, by partaking of the outward sign

. . . we participate in the benefits and blessings of (Christ's) death: and, as far as our faith is brought into exercise, this institution becomes the means of enjoying these benefits, and having actual communion with Christ.<sup>12</sup>

With the passing of the century, the baptist shift from the Calvinism of people like Robert Hall and Godwin, to a Zwinglian or radical understanding of the sacraments made it increasingly difficult for them both to attempt to refute the eucharistic views of the Tractarians and Ritualists and, at the same time, hold on to as much as Godwin had done. Theological debate was too easily overwhelmed by polemical enthusiasm and the desire to deny any "real" presence of Christ in the sacrament could slide into a denial of any presence at all. The tension is later seen in John Clifford, for instance, who highly valued the Lord's Supper but was constantly driven to qualify any statement that seemed to lend it objective validity.

The question of the "real presence" arose again in a series of articles that the *Baptist Magazine* devoted to the study of the Tracts in 1867. Under the general title "What is Anglican Ritualism?" they came from the pen of J. H. Hinton, who had recently retired from the pastorate of the Devonshire Square Baptist Church in London, a post he had combined with that of joint secretary of the Baptist Union.

The first article dealt with the act of consecration in the eucharist. The belief that, at the words of consecration, Christ became actually present in the bread and wine, Hinton described as "the root from which the whole tree of Ritualism grows".<sup>13</sup> The description "the Real Presence" was appropriate only to the Roman rite of transubstantiation, the ritualists believing that the body and blood of Christ were "mystically and spiritually" present in the elements. The following month, Hinton returned to the subject of the real presence, quoting a definition by the Revd. Mr. Mackonochie, the incumbent of St. Alban's in Holborn:

I believe that in the Holy Communion the Body and Blood of Christ are present "really and spiritually" . . . not after a material, or corporeal, or

earthly mode of existence; but after a fashion supra-local, supernatural, heavenly, and spiritual.<sup>14</sup>

Mackonochie's careful avoidance of material categories in describing the real Presence should have helped to clarify the discussion that followed. In fact, that was not the case. It was dogged by the same difficulty of defining exactly what was implied in a belief in Christ's glorified body.

Hinton began by arguing that the Body and Blood of Christ must be a material substance:

If the Body and Blood of Christ be in the Eucharist, it is as material substances they must be there; if that which is there is spirit, not matter, then it is clearly no longer the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Having set up what he believed was the inescapable conclusion that the Body and Blood of Christ *must* be material, he argued that such a presence could not be "supra-local":

. . . it is an established maxim of physical philosophy that no substance can exist in more than one place at one time . . . To deprive a substance of its essential property of occupying space cannot be less than to destroy the substance itself.

Hinton had used the term "substance" as interchangeable currency between "physical philosophy" and theology, investing it with a material connotation implicit in the usage of the former but not necessarily of the latter. This prevented him from developing the nascent solution to the problem of substance which he himself provided. Quoting 1 Corinthians 15.50 he contended that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God, therefore the body of the Risen Christ was a spiritual body. Instead of exploring further the nature of that Risen Body and its implications for eucharistic theology, he used it as a counter to any claim that Christ was "substantially" present in the sacrament. The Risen Body of Jesus was not a material body therefore there could be no substantial presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the eucharist.

The same confusion hung unacknowledged in the air when Hinton, in the following edition, went on to deal with "The Miracle of the Altar". Any miracle, he claimed, must be "*as a fact*, obvious to the senses of mankind". This was not so in the eucharist:

Not only does no apparent change take place in the bread and wine, but the closest examination demonstrates that, according to the evidence of the senses, no change of any kind or degree has taken place. The elements are, by all physical tests, as simply bread and wine after the thaumaturgic words as they were before.<sup>16</sup>

The underlying assumption again was that the glorified body of Jesus was subject to the same conditions as the body of his incarnation, in other words it occupied space. Hinton took no cognizance of the Thomist distinction, satisfactory or not as it may be, between substance and accidents. Standing four-square on "physical philosophy" he could not escape the conclusion that



substance had accidents. The spatial stumbling-block got under his feet again when he related the body of Christ in the sacrament to the body of Christ in heaven, raising the Calvinist objection that Godwin had used before him:

The body and blood of Christ . . . (which, if existent anywhere, are in Heaven, and may be assured to be so for the purpose of this argument), are alleged to be also in the bread and wine, and thus the same thing is affirmed to be in two places at the same time – and not in two only, indeed, but perhaps in 2,000, if in every Eucharist – which is in the nature of things impossible.<sup>17</sup>

His article ended:

. . . here are the body and blood of Christ, held to be in heaven in their natural condition, and affirmed to be in the Eucharist in a spiritual condition; so that the same things are affirmed to be at the same time in two opposite conditions, which is in the nature of things impossible.<sup>18</sup>

The crucial questions went unasked. Given their view of the sacraments it was unlikely that the baptists, any more than other evangelicals, would have wrestled with the problem of the nature of the divine presence in the Lord's Supper. Godwin and Hinton were about the business of refuting incipient catholicism in the Church of England, not framing a eucharistic theology. Anti-catholic abhorrence was inspired by the doctrine of transubstantiation more than any other feature of catholic teaching. It became increasingly important to distance oneself from anything that in any way resembled it.

## II

**The Lord's Supper as Means of Grace.** Apart from the efficacy of Christ's presence in the sacrament, Pusey had emphasised its role as a means of conveying forgiveness to the penitent. Godwin challenged this and the concept of *gradual forgiveness* that flowed from it. Forgiveness was through faith in Christ, said Godwin:

All who believe in Him . . . are forgiven, whether they have received the Eucharist or not; none who have not believed in Him are pardoned, however often they may receive it.<sup>19</sup>

Pusey, concerned to make the sacrament central to the nurture and growth of the Christian life had applied a similar principle of gradualness to the forgiveness of sins. It is easy to see how understanding broke down between Pusey and the evangelicals. His portrayal of the central experience of forgiveness as a gradual release from the burden of sin, with the attendant agonies of doubts, uncertainties, unstilled conscience and guilty memories was in stark contrast to that experience of mercy that lay at the heart of the protestant encounter with God. In evangelical theology, whatever failure there may have been to take full account of the sacramental nourishment by which the soul was brought to maturity in Christ, the central experience of forgiveness was beyond doubt. Forgiveness was not part of a process, slowly realized, it was a *fait accompli*, an irreversible gesture of merciful acceptance on the part of a loving and just God.

To an evangelical there was something almost obsessional in Pusey's notion of cleansing by slow degrees:

. . . as the loving kindness of God admits (the penitent) again and again to that Body and Blood, the stains which his soul had contracted, are more and more effaced, the guilt more and more purged, the wounds more and more healed, the atoning Blood more and more interposed between him and his sins.<sup>20</sup>

Godwin accepted that the sacrament was a means of grace in which we continue to grow, but

. . . this removal of guilt by slow gradations, this pardon by degrees, this forgiveness by instalments, is a doctrine altogether foreign to the scriptures.<sup>21</sup>

Godwin argued that faith was central and it was in the context of faith that "this ordinance (has) its value as a means of grace".<sup>22</sup> In the discussion that followed, there was further evidence of the failure of the theological worlds of Pusey and Godwin to meet. By making the eucharist the means of forgiveness, and gradual forgiveness at that, Pusey had supplanted the liberating truth at the heart of evangelical theology. Acceptance through faith, with the forgiveness of all our sins, was the starting point of the evangelicals' pilgrimage, the heart of their experience of God. So, in reply, Godwin emphasised the centrality of the Word in that experience. It was the Word that declared the sinner forgiven. What followed was a less clear appreciation of the sacrament as a means of Christian nurture. Godwin disagreed with Pusey's assertion that the eucharist was "the means by which spiritual life is imparted and maintained in the soul, and the work of sanctification carried on."<sup>22</sup> On the contrary,

. . . the great chosen instrument by which the Divine Spirit works in renovating and sanctifying the human soul, is, according to the sacred scriptures, THE TRUTH OF GOD, as revealed in the gospel, and received by faith.<sup>24</sup>

The "ordinances of religion, duly administered" may be employed with other means "accessory and subordinate", but it was the gospel itself which was basic. It was the gospel that called and the gospel that sustained the spiritual life:

The Lord's Supper may, as a means of grace, greatly aid in this spiritual process, but it is not by any mysterious or invisible virtue, contained in the bread and wine, or connected with them, but as the institution serves, under God's blessing, to bring the truth vividly before our minds, and in an affecting manner home to our hearts, so that we feel and enjoy the saving benefits of the redeeming work of Christ.<sup>25</sup>

The sacrament was subordinate to the word. It was the word of the gospel that effected the saving experience by which men were forgiven in Christ. The sacrament served to remind believers of that central experience, it held it ever before their minds, but it was not itself a channel of saving grace.

Earlier, Godwin had testified to the nurturing benefits of the Lord's Supper. Pressed, however, to define the sense in which it was a "means of grace", he fell back on a partially Zwinglian view of its role. The sacrament brought the truth "vividly before our minds". The Lord's Supper was didactic and commemorative. This definition was filled out some years later in an article by the Revd. J. T. Gale of Putney in the *Baptist Magazine*.<sup>26</sup> He described the present significance of the supper in the experience of Christian believers. At the Last Supper Jesus gave provision for two needs that would be encountered by his disciples. The first was that their communion with him and their sense of his presence should be sustained, the second that they should be constantly reminded that they belonged also to one another. To serve these twin purposes he left them the ordinance, a sign at once of their union with him and of their unity in Christian fellowship. Of the first, he wrote:

By eating the bread as the symbol of the body, by drinking the wine as the symbol of the blood of Christ, we understand simply the believer's appropriation of the atoning work of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

It was through this appropriation that the Christian was bound as one to his Lord. "There is a union of the believer's spirit to his Lord – they *are* one – the Christian is *in* Christ . . ." The relationship of the sacrament to this experience was that of "outward and visible sign":

As often, then, as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we not only show the Lord's death till He come – we proclaim also to ourselves and to one another the great truth of our present living union with Christ. We show forth that which is secret and invisible. We embody in an act of greatest simplicity a reality of inexpressible grandeur and worth. The deed is only the *clothing* of the holiest and most blessed convictions our souls possess. The sacrament itself is but the outward and visible sign of inward, invisible and inexpressible spiritual consciousness.<sup>28</sup>

Further, the "one loaf" used in communion was a sign of the unity of all Christians. It was

. . . in the truest sense, a communion of the body and blood of Christ – a joint participation of the merits and virtues of His sacrifice and spirit . . . The act of a joint participation in one symbol is designed to keep in clearest possible distinctness the *fact* of *oneness* in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

Gale offered an undiluted Zwinglianism in describing the benefits of the sacrament to those who received it. He linked it, in a living way, with the two most personal of Christian experiences, the union of the believer with Christ and with his fellow believers. Here was more than didacticism or a prod to the memory. In Gale's language, the sacrament did more than *teach* the communicants what Christ had done for them. It was itself part of their experience of him and of one another. Gale echoed the Augustinian definition of a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of "inward, invisible and inexpressible spiritual consciousness", the outward "clothing of the inner experience".

Baptist attitudes swung like a pendulum from radical rejection of any sacramental efficacy to brave attempts to put into words exactly how the sacrament was a "means of grace" without selling the pass to the catholics. If, on the one hand, Godwin could find no role for the sacrament in the central evangelical experience of forgiveness, Gale placed it as central to the believer's continuing experience of union with Christ and his church. Nearer the end of the century, Edward Alden could speak in similar terms in his article on "Baptism and the Lord's Supper".<sup>30</sup> The Lord's Supper

. . . sets forth . . . the Saviour's Body given and His Blood shed, not only . . . for the remission of sins and the gift of new and eternal life, but for the *perpetual sustenance* of that life.<sup>31</sup>

On the human side, the Lord's Supper

. . . exhibits the . . . perpetual need of the soul – the need of sustenance in the New Life – a need only supplied by the continued feeding of our faith on the Bread of Life.<sup>32</sup>

The sacrament was still "an object lesson", but powerful in its reminder that Christ was the continuous source of sustenance in the Christian life and the need of the believer to turn constantly to him, the Bread of Life.

Baptists were torn between the difficulties of theological definition and adequately describing the experience that was actually theirs at their communion tables. There was no clear agreement amongst them. The *Baptist Magazine* in 1896 reported a conference of baptist ministers held in New York at which the Revd. J. M. Whiton had read a paper on "The Meaning of Communion". He had argued that "the view of Zwingli was not adequate. The ordinance was a memorial, but it was more." A discussion followed in which some disagreement amongst the listeners became apparent. The reporter was right in his conclusion:

The subject needs discussion in England also. Even Baptists are not entirely of one mind about it.<sup>33</sup>

Like Whiton himself, there were clearly those, even at the end of the century, who held "the ordinance was a memorial, but it was more".

### III

**The conflict between "spiritual" and "ceremonial" religion.** At the conclusion of his pamphlet, Godwin levelled a charge at Pusey that Robert Hall had already used earlier in the century against those of his fellow baptists who had claimed that the Lord's table should be closed to all but those who had been baptized according to the baptist understanding of the rite. It was to remain part of the baptist armoury in their disputes with catholics. It was that a religion that set too great store by the observance of sacraments or "ceremonies", of which the tractarians were, to baptist eyes, a prime example, devalued true "spiritual" religion. The distinction was one which took baptists further from their Calvinist roots into a more radical direction. Rites and ceremonies, it was claimed, had their roots in the old

covenant that had been swept away by Christ who called for obedience from the heart, an inner and "spiritual" response of faith. It was as if the very elements of the sacraments, the earthly bread and wine and the significance that was attached to them, rooted man's religious experience in the earthy and the "carnal". It turned what belonged to man's soul and the inner perception of faith in the direction of things that could be seen, handled, tasted: substances that, by due performance of certain rites, became the means of God's presence. The move away from this into a more "spiritual" religion was shared by members of Free Churches other than the baptists. J. W. Grant believes that the later decades of the 19th century were marked by an increasing "spiritualization" on the part of Free Churchmen; there was "an inclination to depreciate form and institution, to contrast the spiritual with the material and formal".<sup>34</sup> What Pusey taught, claimed Godwin, "militates against the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel".<sup>35</sup> As a result of his emphasis upon the eucharist,

. . . everything ceremonial has risen in importance, and there seems great reason to fear the spiritual nature of Christianity will be lost sight of, and its evangelical and saving truths be superseded by a religion of outward forms and delusive hopes.<sup>36</sup>

In part, the baptist emphasis reflected the increasing importance that was being attached to the personal character of religious experience during the 19th century, an emphasis that was intrinsic to the evangelical view of man's relationship with God. Rites and sacraments were helpful, but if elevated too much in their importance they acted as a barrier rather than a bridge between God and man. What was true of the sacraments was also true of the church. The church could not proffer faith on behalf of its members, it could not stand proxy for the commitment of the individual, or his own experience of death and resurrection in Christ. The assent of the individual to Christ, in faith and commitment, was central and crucial to the evangelical understanding of the Christian experience.

This contrast of the individual against the corporate, as well as of the "spiritual" against the "material" was illustrated in a leader on "The Individual and Personal Nature of Religion" in the *Freeman* of 19th October, 1881. The article was concerned with the sacrament of baptism and argued that it was not to be administered with the sponsorship or by the authority of the church, but purely as a personal and individual declaration of faith, an astonishing departure from earlier baptist views of the sacrament, apart from its incompatibility with main-line Christian teaching:

Baptism ought to be so observed that it shall be clearly understood to be an individual and personal act and not an act administered in the name, or by the authority, of any church whatever.

In a later letter, written by an anonymous layman, this same detachment of the church and sacrament was applied to the Lord's Supper itself. Writing to the *Freeman* of 12th June, 1886 he drew on his "oriental experience" to recount how there the breaking of bread was a daily occurrence and that it bound those who shared it in a

covenant relationship. He then, strangely, drew a conclusion from the first observation that seemed to cut clean across the second. It should be possible, he said, to celebrate communion often, even daily, and that it was not therefore to be tied to the church. He argued that the *Acts* provided evidence that the ordinance was observed "independently of the church".<sup>37</sup>

This exalted sense of the individual's responsibility in the matter of his religion was underlined in a paper on the subject of "Ritualism", read by the Revd. C. Room to the Baptist Board, a London fraternal of baptist ministers, in 1867.<sup>38</sup> The nonconformist churches, he claimed, placed their emphasis upon the "personal character of New Testament religion". His definition of what he meant by this suggested that the role of the church and its rites was secondary in matters of faith:

By the personal character of New Testament religion we mean the performance of all religious exercises and acts by each individual himself, and the impossibility of any one of them being performed for him consistently within the Christian system.<sup>39</sup>

The setting of this claim was Room's vivid description of the Passiontide and Easter liturgy of which he had been a witness at the Anglo-Catholic church of St. Alban's in Holborn. What was evident in those services, as far as Room was concerned, was a retrograde step, a retreat from the spiritual responsibilities of the individual into a less worthy and "material" form of the Christian faith:

What then; are we mistaken in the progressive character of religion – in its advancement from a lower to a higher standard – from the material to a spiritual form; is the Church to retrograde from its majority to its nonage, from its manhood of intelligence and insight to its childhood of symbol, picture and type; are we, for example, to learn the two natures of the Saviour, not from the lips of the preacher, but from the candles on either side of the communion table; are we to become acquainted with the crucifixion and the atonement, not from the scripture lesson and doctrine, but from the material crucifix or cross?<sup>40</sup>

The growing use of sign and symbol by the ritualists was clearly far removed from the more cerebral modes of apprehension favoured by the radical nonconformists. Room's rhetorical questions ricocheted about the heads of his no doubt appreciative listeners, but they displayed an acute failure to understand his adversaries and, indeed, the ways in which humankind comes to the knowledge of God. All entrances to the human heart, sight, touch, smell, all, save the ears, were blocked and discounted. Victorian individualism combined with a quite worldly view of the power of man's intellect to betroth faith to rationalism, religion to the upward evolutionary march of man. The judgment of J. H. Newman carried a great deal of truth:

A system of Christian doctrine has risen up during the last three centuries in which faith or spiritual mindedness is contemplated and rested on as the end of religion, instead of Christ . . . Stress is laid on the believing rather than on the Object of belief, on the

comfort and persuasiveness of the doctrine rather than on the doctrine itself.<sup>41</sup>

The emphasis on the “subjective” nature of faith returned in an article by J. H. Hinton in which he examined a paper by the Revd. Wm. Humphrey of St. Mary Magdalen, Dundee.<sup>42</sup> “What was the nature of true religion?” he asked.

Two divergent and quite dissimilar views are held. The one that religion is in its nature *subjective*, consisting wholly and exclusively in affections of the mind, with (of course) such practical results as flow from them; the other, that religion is in its nature *sacramental*, essentially requiring the use of sacraments, and effectually generated and perfected by the employment of them. The former view is, I may presume, that held by ourselves; the latter appears to be held by the Ritualists . . .<sup>43</sup>

Throughout his article, Humphrey had stressed the ontological nature of salvation: Christ had transformed the human situation by uniting his divinity with our humanity. The sacraments were objective acts that incorporated men and women into that new humanity, salvation was a being and a becoming more than simply a believing. Hinton stressed the response as against the deed, the inner, “subjective” state of the believer as against the objective reality of that in which he believed. This led Hinton to the conclusion

. . . that Religion is subjective – wholly and exclusively subjective, in strict accordance with man’s position under the moral government of God . . . Pure and undefiled religion is neither less nor more than a change of man’s heart from enmity towards God to friendship, and from the love of sin to the love of holiness.<sup>44</sup>

The language that Hinton used did less than justice to what he intended. Protestant orthodoxy had always strongly emphasised the objective reality of saving grace in the experience of those who, in repentance and faith, threw themselves upon the mercy of God. Salvation rested upon the divine initiative that had acted in Christ and was proclaimed in the Word. The danger of distortion threatened both sides. Only in the worst catholic theology can the sacraments be separated from the consenting faith of those who receive them, just as only in the worst protestant theology can the inner consent of the convert be sundered from the prior acts of God in saving grace. There was failure to understand on both sides. Dr. Peter Toon has argued that, although the controversy with the tractarians had the effect, on the one side, of confirming Anglican evangelicals in the position they held before the contest began, on the other the “Tractarians virtually denied the Evangelical emphases by their sacramental theology”.<sup>45</sup> He claims:

. . . in terms of their differing systems what mattered was that for Evangelicals the individual sinner approached God through Jesus Christ the Mediator, in faith and prayer, while for the Tractarians this direct route through Jesus Christ involved a detour through the visible Church with her apostolic ministry and efficacious sacraments.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, what both sides held as exclusive emphases rightly belonged together. The individual sinner needed the church and sacraments and the recipient of the sacraments needed the inner consent of faith. When sundered from each other the role of the individual was made too self-sufficient and the role of the sacraments too mechanical. Baptists were tempted to lean too far in the direction of the individual and his subjective experience. Hinton, Room and the thunderer of the *Freeman* internalized saving grace to the extent of isolating the individual from the church and sacraments and making him the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. In doing so they struck a responsive chord amongst their Victorian contemporaries whose innate individualism contributed so much to the strengths and weaknesses of the age. All disputes are locked into the times in which they take place. In spite of the undoubted spiritual stature of the leading tractarians, 19th century Catholicism in general did little to allay the justifiable fears of the Protestants. Sadly, in their reaction to it, the majority of Baptists abandoned a view of the eucharist that had been shaped by their Calvinist inheritance in favour of one that owed more to Zwingli and, beyond him, to the radical Anabaptists. Thus the tentative efforts of individual Baptists to go beyond didacticism or memorialism were frustrated by their overwhelming need to distance themselves from a resurgent Catholicism.

#### NOTES

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## EBERHARD JÜNGEL: GOD IS LOVE

DAVID F. FORD

Eberhard Jüngel has produced a remarkable range of theology, in new Testament studies, philosophy, Luther and Barth studies, sermons and, above all, in constructive systematics or dogmatics. He is also an outstanding lecturer – I remember being surprised in Tübingen that more students went to his lectures than to Moltmann's, Küng's and Kasper's combined. The English-speaking world has been slowly engaging with him, with the help of more translations, a good introduction to his theology by John Webster, and the recognition that many theologians are finding his thought fruitful.

This essay is an exploration of his work along two lines: through his *magnum opus* so far, *God as the Mystery of the World. On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism* (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1983) [hereinafter referred to as *God*]; and through John Webster's *Eberhard Jüngel. An Introduction to his Theology* (Cambridge University Press 1986) [*Introduction*].

### Thinking

"We no longer dare to think God," says Jüngel in his Foreword to the first and second editions of *God*. He insists on the great need for this thought, on its necessary complexity and slowness and on the inadequacy of most contemporary theology. His own thinking in this book shows most affinities with Barth seasoned by Bultmann

and Heidegger, and, perhaps even more fundamentally, the christology of Luther and the philosophy of Hegel. Through all this runs his interpretation of the New Testament, the pivotal texts being 1 John's "God is love" and Paul's "word of the cross". His style of thinking is fascinatingly rich yet vigorous. He tends to crystallize key concepts by thinking through metaphors, narratives, basic experiences (love, trust, anxiety, joy) and other theologies and philosophies, and his conceptual creativity is one of his main contributions to theology. In what follows I will be examining the series of gems that he produces in his thought of God. This catena of memorable, concentrated phrases is probably the best way into his theology, and it has the stimulating quality of helping to provoke and nourish fresh thought even when one might question Jüngel's own method and conclusions

If I were looking for a contemporary theologian with whom to contrast Jüngel the most illuminating choice would be Pannenberg. Jüngel himself clearly respects Pannenberg, yet right at the start of *God* he distinguishes sharply their two ways of doing theology. This is very important for understanding his position. He sees Pannenberg attempting to think God without presupposing a relationship with God, as if it were possible to think one's way into faith from outside. Pannenberg laments the rejection of natural theology by many Protestant theologians and insists on the rational content of the thought of God. Jüngel also sees the thought of God as rational, but his God cannot be rationally inferred from the world. Rather, God freely and without necessity addresses human beings and is to

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be known in this relationship. Jüngel's question to Pannenberg is: "Does [your] procedure, which makes the necessity of God plausible by first analysing human existence without God, take seriously enough of the fact that God, like man, should be thought of *from the context of freedom?*" (God p.17.)

In his Foreword to the third edition Jüngel reviews responses to his book and concludes that "all the questions directed to my theological position can be summarized in the recommendation to return to the anthropological grounding of the thought of God, . . . 'to demonstrate on the path of reason the boundaries of reason and the necessity of the self-surpassing of reason' (Kasper)" (p.xiii). In other words, Pannenberg's method is the main alternative. But for Jüngel something has already happened which fundamentally affects the way God can be thought. Once that event, witnessed to in the New Testament, has been recognized, its content cannot but inform all theology. So Jüngel's thinking "goes from the inside towards the outside, from the specifically Christian faith experience to a concept of God which claims universal validity" (p.viii).

This conflict is fundamental to much 20th century theology, with Barth as the main champion on Jüngel's side. Many of Webster's criticisms of Jüngel seem to stem from deep disquiet about Jüngel's consistent pursuit of his approach. Indeed Jüngel's singlemindedness and rigour in doing this provide yet another way in which his theology is immensely stimulating even for those who might not share all his positions. I will take up this issue again later, but now want to follow further Jüngel's thinking in *God*.

### God is more than necessary

Jüngel sees Bonhoeffer in his *Letters and Papers from Prison* diagnosing the modern situation of thought about God correctly: the development has been towards human autonomy for which the hypothesis of God is not a necessity for understanding or acting in the world. This "worldly nonnecessity of God" is at the heart of modern atheism. But it can also be interpreted in Christian terms. It helps to expose how unchristian is the concept of God rejected by this atheism: "atheism can be rejected only if one overcomes theism" (p.43). It is a challenge to think God anew. Bonhoeffer pointed the way in his remarks linking the crucifixion of Jesus with God's presence and absence and even with God's being. But above all Hegel, in conscious dependence on Luther, saw that christology could inform a concept of God which could take "the death of God" seriously as a moment of truth in God himself. God's being is in becoming, and death is a moment in this. So talk of the death of God could be genuinely Christian rather than atheist.

If God is "pushed out of the world onto the cross" (Bonhoeffer) and the world can be understood in its own terms without him, does that mean that God is simply unnecessary? Here Jüngel introduces one of his key concepts: God is more than necessary. This means that God is not just in a relation of freedom with the world but that he offers a whole new possibility to it. That God is love and that he loves the world is not something that can be inferred from the world – God has created the world as a

sphere with its own integrity. One of Jüngel's striking ways of putting this is in three propositions:

- (a) Man and his world are interesting for their own sake.
- (b) Even more so, God is interesting for his own sake.
- (c) God makes man, who is interesting for his own sake, interesting in a new way." (p.34)

This new way of being interesting is given as the possibility that revelation brings. This revelation utterly respects the freedom and integrity of the world (to the point of dying rather than coercing it or becoming necessary to it) and this involves a mode of presence which is not an omnipresence understood as a sort of superlative worldly presence. "The being of God is in fact to be thought of as a being which explodes the alternative of presence and absence" (p.62). Just as the word of a person may represent presence through absence, the death of Jesus is an absence conveyed in "in the word of the cross" and acting as the catalyst of new possibilities. The presence of God can be rethought as the withdrawal of his omnipotence, and his omnipotence as the withdrawal of his omnipresence.

In the course of this presentation Jüngel comes nearest to giving what might be seen as a rational framework for this theology in the Pannenberg mode. He explores the most radical question of all: why is there something rather than nothing? In existential terms this is about the threat of non-being. This is not an experience in any ordinary sense but is "an experience with experience" (p.32). It can take shape as anxiety, but also as gratitude for being which need not necessarily be. Revelation makes it possible that this experience with experience is unambiguously one of gratitude. Talk about God has its proper location in relation to this experience regarding being and non-being. So God is experienced as "the one who distinguishes between being and not being and who decides in favour of being" (p.34). The distinguishing mark of the Christian God is that he is not above the contradiction of being and non-being but "is God *in the midst* of this contradiction" (p.35).

In what sense is this not a Heideggerian version of Pannenberg's anthropological grounding of talk of God? It has been interpreted as this, but the vital difference is in its non-foundational role in the argument. It has the status of a way of understanding things that may be helpful, but it is not a systematic framework.

The philosophy of Hegel is the other possible candidate offering a foundation but Jüngel does not follow him all the way. He affirms Hegel as a Lutheran reinterpreter of modern atheism in the interest of a more Christian concept of God, but criticizes him for failing to differentiate God and humanity satisfactorily. The crucial point concerns the necessity of God's relation to creation. Jüngel sees Hegel conceiving the world as necessary to God. So in Hegel's scheme it is not possible to do justice to God as more than necessary or to have a proper conception of both the relationship and the distinction between God and humanity. Much of the rest of the book is an attempt to do better than Hegel in this, and in particular Jüngel's new concept of analogy (discussed below) deals with the problem.

## Speech precedes thought

Jüngel discusses Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Feuerbach and Nietzsche in their thought of God. The overall verdict is that they all, in various ways, presuppose the God of metaphysical theism whose absoluteness cannot accommodate the “word of the cross” or the primacy of love. Descartes’ God is typical: necessary, omnipotent in a way that is completely alien to weakness, and his omnipresence conceived on the model of the clearly comprehending ego as the place of true presence. Such an assessment has been fairly common in recent theology (though one might wish that the very different recovery of Descartes’ God by Emmanuel Levinas were taken seriously), but Jüngel introduces in addition a proposal as to what the characteristic new move made by such thinkers was. He sums it up: “Human thought now found its natural place between God’s essence and God’s existence” (p.109). The relationship of human thought to God was defined in a new way by Descartes. God was seen as necessary because of the need of a superior being to ground the continuity of the thinking ego. So God’s existence was tied to a human need. At the same time, by contrast, the essence of God was defined in line with traditional metaphysics as absolute and not dependent on any human relation.

It was inevitable that this should lead to insoluble problems, and Jüngel traces this history through several positions: Fichte’s denial of the conceivability of God in response to Kant’s denial of the knowability of God; Feuerbach’s claim that thinking of God is the fulfilment of human thought and does not involve the existence of God; and Nietzsche’s questioning of the conceivability and existence of God. In each, human thought has set itself the task of deciding, according to self-generated criteria, about God. Is there any other way?

Jüngel’s proposal is twofold: God must be thought so that no distinction is allowed between his existence and essence; and thought itself must be conceived so that in perceiving existence it does not separate it from essence. In short, we need to “learn to think both God and thought anew” (p.154).

As regards thought, Jüngel rejects one modern tendency to see it as self-grounding and primary in relation to outward expression. Instead he follows another modern tendency to see thought as secondary to language. “That thought *can* form concepts at all is made possible by an even more original fact, the fact of addressing language” (p.167). It is like an amendment of Paul’s dictum to read: faith and thought come by hearing. So Jüngel says that “the place of the conceivability of God is a Word which precedes thought” (p.155). It is the event of being addressed that allows God to be thought. It is a whole history of encounter with God that allows the possibility of conceiving him. This means that thought is not self-grounded, and that thought of God follows faith in God by claiming a certainty that involves trust in a word.

As regards God, I will now present the pivotal concept.

## God’s unity with perishability

Both the Bible and modern thought demand, in Jüngel’s view, a rethinking of the relation of God to perishability (*Vergänglichkeit* – Webster renders it “transience”, which is more elegant but not quite as strong). Perishability is usually seen as purely negative, but it can also be understood positively, as the chance for new possibility to emerge. The full actuality of the death of God on the cross must be affirmed, but actuality is not all reality. Possibility is the “ontological plus” and not less real than the actual. This primacy of the possible is what allows Jüngel to conceptualize the death of God. God is overflowing being, whose reality is in possibility as well as actuality. So the key formulation is: “that which is ontologically positive about perishability is the possibility” (p.213).

Above all, the word brings possibility. Even the far off past, which has lost its reality, can have possibilities through the word. Annihilation, nothingness, is of course an alternative, but that is not a necessity. So “the positive meaning of talk about the death of God would then imply that God *is* in the midst of the struggle between nothingness and possibility” (p.217). The cross means that God involves himself in nothingness, in death, and resists its annihilating power, enabling the new possibility given in the resurrection. God both identifies himself with death and differentiates himself from it. In narrative terms that is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because it is done for others it is love. And conceptually it leads to the replacement of the distinction between the essence and existence of God by the differentiation of Father from Son.

I apologize for the extreme compression and density of such a summary! But it might best be taken as a mapping exercise which is aimed partly at giving some impression of the main contours of the book and partly at being a travellers’ guide for those who do follow me in reading it. It has taken three readings to get this far!

## In great dissimilarity, even greater similarity

The vital role of language in Jüngel’s thought requires that theological language be closely studied. His concept of God’s involvement in death raises the obvious question as to what differentiates God from humanity, which was also the point at which he most severely criticized Hegel. Traditionally too the issue of language was central to the attempt to avoid idolatry and anthropomorphism in relation to God. Jüngel tackles this head-on through the question of analogy. How can human language genuinely speak of God without undermining his difference?

Jüngel does a complex analysis of the tradition of analogous talk about God, giving special attention to Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas and Kant. He finds the basic principle to be that in using any term of God, for all the similarity of God to the term (humanly understood), one must affirm an even greater dissimilarity. Or, for all the nearness of God one must affirm an even greater distance. In the interests of the difference of God from the world, the last word is always with the negative way, saying that God is inexpressible mystery. So language is used to deny language.



Jüngel's alternative is strikingly simple. His formula is: for all the great dissimilarity between God and humanity, there is an even greater similarity. God has freely become human, whereas the other tradition in effect does not permit God to be human. Moreover, that tradition does not allow God to come in language: it implies a non-lingual relationship with humanity and a mystery that is most properly related to in ways other than through language. But the New Testament idea of *mysterion* is of a mystery that must be spoken, that happens as an event in speech. "In contrast with the negative concept of mystery, the New Testament designates that to be a mystery which must be *said* at all costs and which may under no circumstances be kept silent . . . The public realm belongs . . . to the essence of the mystery." (p.250). The suppression of this meaning of mystery is a "dark puzzle" and has had devastating effects on speech and thought of God. Its only excuse is that it has tried to maintain the distinction of God and humanity. But it has done so at the cost of Christian understanding of God. So the challenge to Jüngel is to affirm both the gospel of a God of love, whose nearness is not qualified by an even greater distance, and a proper distinction between creator and creature.

His solution is to reverse the relations of similarity and dissimilarity. In the light of the gospel, and above all of the cross, one can take the step of saying that God's difference from us is always even more a difference in love: his transcendence is not understood only through his self-relatedness but also through his even greater selflessness. His very being realizes itself "*in the midst of such great self-relatedness as still greater selflessness, and is as such love*" (p.298). That is the ontological statement corresponding to the hermeneutical statement about analogy as the still greater similarity in the midst of great dissimilarity. It is the conceptual heart of the book, and I will pay special critical attention to it later.

Meanwhile, the further linguistic content that is given to this concept of analogy needs examining. The idea is that God comes in an event of speech, which is called the "analogy of advent". God introduces himself by using the language of the world. The clue to how this works is found in metaphor and especially in parable, which Jüngel understands as a narrative form of metaphor. In parables, ordinary, obvious aspects of the world (treasure in a field, a father and his prodigal son) are taken up and talked about so that they correspond to the relation of God to the world. The result is that God does not appear primarily as dissimilar or beyond words but that through the ordinariness and obviousness of the parable the even greater ordinariness and obviousness of God and his Kingdom can be seen. The stories of the treasure or the prodigal son create a new ordinariness which is analogously related to treasure and prodigals through the event of the parable being told. What happens is that  $x$  (God) comes to  $a$  (the world) with the help of  $b$  (the father) and  $c$  (the prodigal). So  $x \rightarrow a = b:c$ . But in this event God does not remain an  $x$ , but introduces himself afresh. The whole gospel has this parabolic character of an address which introduces God through an ordinary narrative and in doing so creates a new, eschatological ordinariness.

So in the way parables work Jüngel finds the basic clue to the problem of analogy. In parables there is both a differentiation of the Kingdom of God from whatever it is compared with and also an even greater similarity. As the hearer is drawn into the free, playful process of realizing the richness of the similarities, so he or she can be converted to the new reality of the Kingdom of God. Jüngel even claims that "basically all language forms of faith participate in the structure of parabolic language" (p.293). The further question is clearly: how does he work this out in relation to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

### "The humanity of God as a story to be told"

Jüngel sees the story of Jesus as the ordinariness through which "the humanity of God" is communicated. Where is God? In unity with this man for the sake of all. But that is a concept which can only be thought in the first place by following the story of Jesus. Narrative has a primacy in theology because of the temporal, event character of God's love. Other types of theology are needed, but "that thinking which wants to understand God will always be led back to narrative. The thought of God can be thought only as the telling of a story, whereby the concepts are to be carefully controlled" (p.303).

This fundamentally affects the character of Christian theology. The consciousness with which it thinks is inextricably entangled in this story. There is a narrative depth structure to our reason and we can only in thinking correspond to God by "constantly telling the story anew" (p.304). What about the factuality of the story? Jüngel stresses the way in which past history can liberate new possibilities and so is more interested in the possibility than the factuality of the historical events. Yet he also affirms that "the story of Jesus Christ cannot arrive at the 'truth of the point' apart from the 'truth of the factual', while the parable can be indifferent to the 'truth of the factual'" (p.309). Unfortunately, despite the fact that this is a vital matter in the dispute with Pannenberg, Jüngel does not show how his factuality is to be understood.

The theological interpretation of the story of Jesus is the main theme of the rest of the book. Apart from a fascinating aside on the church – calling it an "institution of narration" (p.312) – the focus is on the Trinity as a conceptual unfolding of that story, and on both story and Trinity as ways of expressing the God of love.

### God is love: the Trinitarian mystery of the world

The whole book comes together in the final part, as the string of crucial concepts unite in a doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine is not well developed. It is sketched in a number of sections on love, faith, Jesus Christ, the differentiation of Father, Son and Spirit and the Trinity as the mystery of the world. It serves, however, to fulfil what the subtitle of the book promises – a "foundation" (*Begründung*) for a theology of the crucified one.

"To think God as love is the task of theology" (p.315). In doing this, theology must do justice to our experience of love as well as to God. So Jüngel meditates on human love in order to connect our experience with key concepts derived from the story of Jesus. Love is, formally, the

event of still greater selflessness in great self-relatedness. Materially, love is the unity of life and death for the sake of life. Relationally, love is related to a specific other and is fulfilled in the exchange of mutual surrender, a dialectic of being in freedom. The self in love is received in a new way through the love of the other, and is also newly vulnerable. This weakness in love means dying to all that is not love and uniting life and death in favour of life.

Jüngel links this meditation into his description of the Trinity as the living unity of life and death, demonstrated in the story of Jesus Christ. The man Jesus is the pointer to the Trinity (the *vestigum trinitatis*). Jüngel accepts Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God as at the heart of his ministry: "One can say that Jesus' entire humanity was so unlimitedly moulded by his proclamation of the Kingdom of God that his humanity is virtually defined by it" (p.353). His parables were the distinctive way in which he did this in language, enabling the "new obviousness" of the Kingdom of God and the quality of reconciliation to become evident. But the Kingdom (and opposition to it) is inseparable from his own person. Therefore what happened to this person is crucial. For Jüngel, Jesus "let God be the God who prevailed in every act of his life" (p.358). His humanity "consisted of the freedom to want to be nothing at all *for himself* . . . There is nothing here of balance between selflessness and self-relatedness. The *being* of this man was rather the *event* of a selflessness which surpasses all self-relatedness . . . As such, it was the being of a man who corresponded to God, and it was the human parable of the God who is love" (p.358).

So what happened in this man's death? The identity of Christianity hangs on this. Death itself is not really an event, but the ending of the event of a life. The first thing to be said about the death of Jesus is that, in the light of the resurrection proclamation, something did happen in the death of Jesus. The "difficult thought" that Jüngel is led to is that "in this death God himself was the event that happened . . . It is a thought which Christian theology has constantly evaded. But it is a necessary thought. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead means that God has identified himself with this dead man. And that immediately means that God identified himself with Jesus' God-forsakenness. And that means further that God identified himself with the life lived by this dead man" (p.363).

But what does this identification mean? It is a self-definition of God which involves a self-differentiation. God differentiates himself from himself in the event of this death, and conceptually the result is the need to think of God as Trinity. "The Trinity conceptualizes the passion history of God" (p.371). The axioms of absoluteness, *apatheia* and immutability are rejected. Instead of the Cartesian separation of the essence from the existence of God, love is seen as both God's essence and, in the crucified one, his existence. God comes from God as love, which is a way of saying he is God the Father. God comes to God as love, which is a way of saying he is God the Son. And in this differentiation there is an event of eternally new relationship: God comes as God the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son constitutes the unity of the divine as that event which is love itself by preserving the differentiation" (p.374).

All this love overflows and is for us: God desires to set us on fire with his love, and "for that to happen, the human *word* is needed which allows the triune God to be expressed in language in that it tells the story of Jesus Christ as God's history with all people" (pp.376f). Jüngel ends the book with almost a sermon on human participation through faith, love and hope. Common to each is a structure of self in which "we do not have ourselves" (p.390). We relate to the invisible God who comes into the world and addresses us. In faith we are freed from fixation on ourselves by the "liberating experience of God as the mystery of the world which makes man himself a mystery" (p.391). In love we can correspond to the God of love and so be truly human, sharing in the mystery of God without losing our differentiation from him. Hope is for the future of love, including the transformation of our earthly existence. In all this we become ever more human in relation with the God who "is that love which can neither be surreptitiously gained nor coerced, which is entirely unnecessary and thus is more than necessary" (p.396).

### Webster's introduction

How does John Webster deal with this complex position? In the first place he contextualises it well. For readers from the English-speaking world he is attentive to ways in which Jüngel is difficult or likely to be misunderstood for cultural reasons. He also offers translations of quotations which usually show how Darrel Guder could have done better with *God* (although the ultimate in inept translation in that book is not from the German but from Jüngel's frequent use of Latin, which is rendered as if by someone without any knowledge of the language consulting a dictionary). Webster is also attentive to Jüngel's development and is good at identifying key elements – the influence of Fuchs on Jüngel's thought about language, the new stress on ordinariness in *God's* treatment of parables, the priority always given to the reality of God's prevenient gift of himself to the world and the correlative move of identifying God through the history of Jesus Christ, and the central significance of Jüngel's book on Barth's doctrine of the Trinity.

As regards *God*, Webster is careful in his account, though his way of dividing his discussion of the book leaves the reader without a coherent overview of it and without a sense of how the key concepts interanimate each other. Throughout his discussion he offers comments and very occasionally a more lengthy critique, and the points he makes are always worth noting.

A recurring criticism is that Jüngel's whole approach and way of thinking is too "monistic", too lacking in specific attention to the variety, discontinuities, paradoxes, and sheer ungeneralizable particularity of reality. This is applied to many areas. Jüngel is accused of having too limited a set of partners in dialogue, excluding Marx, Freud, most theology and philosophy in English, and any significant restatements of natural theology. His own "authorities" are seen to be lacking in variety and in the ability to question radically the overall coherence that he offers. A similar problem is detected in Jüngel's use of "language" as all-encompassing – he does not seem to do justice to the role of action in reality. And within language

Webster questions the way metaphor (and its narrative form, parable) is given primacy to the neglect of other forms of speech. The New Testament is also constrained to focus systematically on “the word of the cross”, and its pluralism and contexts are not given theological weight. Above all, Jesus Christ is the all-embracing reality through whom ontological coherence is found, and it is hard to see how other reality retains its particularity and integrity. In short, Webster thinks Jüngel’s thinking is not “polymorphous” enough and that the conceptual economy which I have traced above is bought at the price of fidelity to reality in all its diversity. In the next section I will develop some of these points in my own way, but it is worth noting that Webster does not clearly identify the key issue underlying many of these criticisms: it is the same as that between Pannenberg and Barth which I referred to at the beginning of this article, and it has to do with the form of coherence appropriate to Christian theology and the very possibility of conceiving “other reality” in the way Webster suggests.

Webster has various other criticisms. He congratulates Jüngel on doing better than Barth in handling human freedom and the openness of history, but still questions whether there is a deep ambiguity at the heart of Jüngel’s understanding of humanity. On the one hand, God is not necessary and so we can be genuinely human without God; on the other hand, humanity is only itself by expressing God. Perhaps Jüngel could respond by both developing his ideas of “more than necessary” and freedom, and also by making clearer how far his anthropology is eschatological. But the fundamental issue undoubtedly remains the Barthian challenge to any concept of human freedom that is not secondary to God’s freedom. Webster also finds Jüngel defective in the place he gives to human ethical deliberation and action, in his sketchy treatment of the Holy Spirit, in his inadequate treatment of Aquinas on analogy, in his inappropriate way of handling the natural world (e.g. through seeing it as of parabolic significance in theology) and in his account of the resurrection of Jesus as an event of disclosure and not an event in temporal continuity with the crucifixion. Perhaps most fundamentally of all, he asks whether Jüngel’s idea of the death of God does away with God as almighty and free. I will try to think through some of these issues.

### **Parable and gospel: a serious error**

As Webster says, Jüngel does do less than justice to the diversity of forms of language, but this needs to be made more specific. His thought about metaphor and parable is brilliant and largely convincing, but he makes one serious error. Not content with enabling the parables to address and grip us more powerfully, he goes on to embrace the whole gospel story in the category of parable. The key difference is seen to be that the gospel claims the “truth of the factual” as well as the “truth of the point” of a parable.

This assimilation of gospel to parable is not argued for persuasively and it is hard to justify. The gospel is an unusual genre, and it is hardly understood adequately by identifying it with one of the genres which it contains in itself. It embraces various types of discourse, mostly not parabolic, and overall it is probably better characterized as

“realistic narrative”. It tells of characters and events in interaction over time in varied circumstances and uses many forms to do this. Ironically, the work that could have saved Jüngel from this error, Hans Frei’s *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, is mentioned by him in a footnote, but it does not seem to have been taken seriously. A further irony is that Barth’s interpretation of the gospels seems much more sensitive than Jüngel on this point.

Why does Jüngel miss it? Partly because the thinking of such mentors as Fuchs and Heidegger has no place for it. Also, in line with their thought and with much current hermeneutics, he is deeply concerned with how a genre “works” on the hearer or reader. The parable theory is attractive in offering an interactive understanding of the gospel which makes the dynamics of “addressing language” primary. Within the New Testament this seems appropriate to parables, letters, sayings and speeches, but it is dangerous to impose it on the whole of a gospel. Perhaps one of the marks of a gospel is that it is less tied to being grasped only in a certain sort of “event” of reception. It does a much more thorough job of rendering its own world of meaning. Above all it is concerned to identify Jesus by words, actions and events, and this can “work” in a wide variety of ways, none of them necessarily systematically connected with the genre of the story.

Whatever the reasons, the consequences of Jüngel’s move are important. Firstly, he is led to distinguish gospel from parable using the categories of “fact” and “point”. As I noted above, he does not make clear what “fact” involves. He avoids Pannenberg’s attempt to give a historical critical justification of the factual truth of some gospel events. But he is forced by his categories into giving some sort of account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in terms that can stand critical scrutiny. His solution is to offer a sort of minimalist characterization of Jesus in terms of his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, especially in parables, and the opposition to it culminating in his death, but to rule the resurrection completely out as far as Pannenberg’s sort of investigation goes. He is in danger of having the worst of both worlds. On the one hand, he has given up Barth’s thoroughgoing reliance for his theological reflection on the story as told in the New Testament. On the other hand, he is not prepared to go along all the way with Pannenberg’s critical historical *Wissenschaft*. Some of the most persistent problems in modern christology are involved in this dilemma, but it would at least help Jüngel get further with his approach if he were to free the gospels from too close an identification with parables and their way of working on their audience.

Secondly, the primacy he gives parable leads him into general anthropological statements about narrative and human existence and general methodological statements about narrative in theology (see especially *God* Chap. V Section 19). This has several disadvantages. It brings him dangerously close to the Pannenberg method he wants to avoid. It is not clear whether it furthers his main argument at all (but perhaps, as I have argued for his treatment of being and non-being, it is not meant to function as foundation or framework, merely as an illuminating suggestion). And it does not do justice to the complex pluralism and interrelation of genres both in the

Bible and theology. Might it not be that the Trinity itself is a doctrine whose logic is closely linked to the pluralism of genres – maybe e.g. realistic narrative is primary in identifying the Son but metaphor is more central in relation to the Spirit, and that the mode of their interrelation should be one of coinherence not subordination?

### Analogy and similarity

One of Jüngel's strengths is his insistence on the importance of analogy. This is in striking contrast with his colleague Moltmann, whose treatment of the same theme of "the crucified God" seems philosophically naive as a result. The flatfootedness of Moltmann's ascription of suffering and death to God is avoided by Jüngel, who maintains that the dissimilarity between God and humanity is still vital. The danger with talk of similarity and dissimilarity is that it misses that dimension of incomparability which the tradition of analogy wanted to affirm. Jüngel is playing for high stakes in his reversal of the balance towards similarity because it might compromise the incomparability of God: *deus non est in genere*. He is acutely aware of the risk and tries brilliantly to avoid it in his various affirmations of the differentiation between God and humanity. But even greater is his concern to criticize the tradition for being insufficiently Christian in its concept of God. If God has freely and fully identified himself in Jesus Christ then Jesus Christ is intrinsic to the being of God and it is wrong to allow dissimilarity to have the last word. An alternative to the analogical way would be that of paradox but Jüngel does not take that. Instead he courageously formulates his concept of analogy and follows it through with a doctrine of the Trinity based on the very event that was most awkward for the traditional understanding, the death of Jesus Christ. God is incomparable because he is the God of love revealed in this event and person.

The final question must therefore be about this issue specified in the subtitle of the book, but first it is worth asking about the adequacy of his concept of analogy. It seems to me to be right in exposing the non-Trinitarian nature of the God presupposed by many traditional concepts and by the theism and atheism of modern times. Specifically on the issue of language he is convincing in his attack on the idea of mystery as being beyond words and his affirmation of a mystery which is essentially communicative. The logic of his reversal of the relationship between similarity and dissimilarity is straightforward, and it keeps the appropriate dissimilarity through the stress on the initiative and freedom of God. Yet it does raise a problem. Why be so concerned to assert the *greater* similarity? The answer ultimately is probably to do with his idea of love and the role of identification in it. Yet one could perhaps have all the benefits of Jüngel's idea of analogy while making it more Trinitarian. Why speak in pseudo-quantitative language? Is that not what the Trinitarian resolution of the subordinationist controversy avoided? Why not in the idea of analogy have a concept of *coinherence* which preserves differentiation and otherness without even trying to assess a greater or a lesser? Then in the "analogy of advent" God could be understood to introduce himself in a way more thoroughly appropriate to what Jüngel wants to affirm, the identification of the immanent and

the economic Trinity.

### The death of God

There is no avoiding a final grappling with the major constructive suggestion of the book, that the death of Jesus is the death of God and that this is the basis of a doctrine of the Trinity. It is put with Lutheran audacity and a Hegelian conceptuality modified by Jüngel's notion of possibility. At its heart is the logic of love as self-giving, where the process is defined through the gospel story and the self is understood through Hegel.

Let us start with a crude question: why is it that the New Testament, on which Jüngel rests his main argument, says that God raised from the dead but not that God died? This, it seems to me, is the chief reason for the tradition's reluctance to talk as Hegel and Jüngel do. So how can Jüngel justify his statements? The appeal is to the conceptual implications of the story. This seems a legitimate move. Just as it is possible to speak a language for years without ever conceptualizing its grammar and syntax, so it might have been possible for the early church to have a gospel which identified God in the way Jüngel suggests without them ever finding an appropriate conceptuality for it. This is a plausible way of accounting for the long time it took the doctrine of the Trinity to be formulated (if you think that is appropriate to the gospel story!). A further twist would then be to say with Jüngel that the Trinitarian reconception of God did not go far enough because it failed to take the death of Jesus seriously enough.

Yet such a fundamental innovation in relation to the New Testament is still open to question. It can be made more acceptable by examining more closely what Jüngel does. He is not only reconceiving God in the light of this story but is reconceiving *death* too. His idea of death is not that of the Old Testament or New Testament texts but is defined in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is death relativized by the death of Jesus. It is no longer the sort of absolute negative which it is inappropriate to ascribe to God. In the New Testament there are the grounds for saying that God dies (so long as you allow your previous notions of both God and death to be transformed by reference to the gospel), but the idea of death is usually used in the text in its ordinary meaning which it is not right to apply to God.

I am inclined to go along with that, but still find a grave problem with Jüngel's position. Is it not too neat? Can death really be done justice to like this? It can be a powerful point in changing our conceptuality and in affecting our existential self-understanding, but what about the material side of death? The death of Jesus is at least about blood, brain death and a dead body, and it happens in space and time; and the resurrection too needs to have some relation to all this. Jüngel never squarely faces this. To do so would require a doctrine of creation which takes some account of the physical sciences and the nature of time and material reality. He gains the rhetorical advantage of having to do with reality in all its particularity and messiness by making the death of Jesus central. But he does not take full responsibility for this move. The focus is too easily shifted to this event as

parabolic of God. He can talk of truth interrupting the continuity of life, but the content of the interruption is more linguistic than physical. Likewise his crucial concept of possibility needs working through at the physical as well as the linguistic and existential levels. This need not mean adopting some natural theological framework, but it does require, especially in relation to the assurance that death is not the end of possibility, that this discourse be connected responsibly with the most obvious feature of Jesus on the cross, his dead body.

### What sort of theology?

That last point might be taken to be advocating Pannenberg's way of trying to integrate a theological perspective with other disciplines. In a review of Pannenberg's *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (in *King's Theological Review* no. 10, 1987, pp.21-25) Christoph Schwöbel concludes that Pannenberg runs the risk of reversing the relationship in his title and offering a theology in anthropological perspective. That is what Jüngel thinks of Pannenberg and it is what he himself most wants to avoid. Yet it is possible to be sympathetic with his basic decision (to have as his integrator the identification of God through the story of Jesus Christ in the context of the story of Israel, and to disallow any more general framework than that) without cutting off dialogue and the possibility of a whole range of *ad hoc* relationships which could be mutually illuminating. Jüngel in fact does this with Heidegger, Nietzsche and others, and his strategy in relation to metaphysics (to have free, controversial dialogue for the sake of both disciplines) should be extended to other areas. Where Webster's accusation of "monism" is valid is in criticizing the range of real dialogue, and also in suggesting that the gospel story itself might warrant a theology less confident of its correspondences and more sensitive to fragmentariness, intractable contradictions and the dark mystery of evil. The result might look like the theology of Barth appropriated with more of the interrogative tone of Donald MacKinnon.

Perhaps part of the problem is simply to do with the genre of Jüngel's own theology. It is the theology of a superb lecturer and preacher and has affinities with the lecture and the sermon, both of which have a tendency to the monological. In line with them it gives primacy to "address" but the thinking behind it is typically, as he says himself, "slow and solitary". That solitary thought is a vital moment in theological life is true, but the question is how satisfactorily to do justice to the variety of conversations, challenges and calls to joint adventures in thought required by the joint, ecclesial character of Christian theology.

But none of this should obscure the achievement of Jüngel in *God*. He calls it a "study book", and it makes the most exacting demands on the student. Yet it is well worth the struggle to follow the thought. I hope a sense of the richness as well as the difficulty has come across in this article. It is a theology of the crucified God which helps to articulate that mystery as central to existence. It identifies the key issues, never shirks the labour of thinking them through and is always fruitful in insights and concepts. Above all it achieves the remarkable feat of delivering the gospel message in a rigorously intellectual

way which yet does not domesticate it. One is engaged intellectually and spiritually at the same time in a sustained, intense way as Jüngel tries to "think God and thought anew". Faced with the rather dull and boring doctrines of God that abound, it is stimulating to have one which does succeed in speaking of a "God who is interesting for his own sake", in the light of whom our world and existence, including theology, seem "interesting in a new way". More than that, he even dares to affirm that to think something for its own sake is a matter of wonder and joy and that this is at the heart of Christian theology: "For 'faith' you might say 'joy in God' . . . Joy in God is the source of genuine thinking of God" (p.192).

## THE “CLASSICS OF WESTERN SPIRITUALITY”: ECKHART, TAULER, RUUSBROEC

NICHOLAS WATSON

A review article of: *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, translated and introduced by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and Bernard McGinn, with a preface by Huston Smith. 366pp. The Classics of Western Spirituality. SPCK/Paulist Press, 1981.

*Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, edited and translated by Bernard McGinn, with the collaboration of Frank Tobin and Elvira Borgstädt, and a preface by Kenneth Northcott. 420pp. The Classics of Western Spirituality. SPCK/Paulist Press, 1986.

*Johannes Tauler: Sermons*, translated by Maria Shradly, introduced by Josef Schmidt, with a preface by Alois Haas. 183pp. The Classics of Western Spirituality. SPCK/Paulist Press, 1985.

*John Ruusbroec: The Spiritual Espousals and Other Words*, introduced and translated by James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., with a preface by Louis Dupré. 286pp. The Classics of Western Spirituality. SPCK/Paulist Press, 1986.

### I

The Classics of Western Spirituality series has been with us for about 10 years, and continues to publish new volumes at a respectable rate; there must be about 60 by now, with more to come. The series covers an extremely diverse range of historical periods and kinds of religious culture and writing: treatises, sermons, story-collections, scraps of legend and folklore, hymns, and visions, from Christian, Jewish, Moslem and native North American sources, some 1,800 years old, a few nearly contemporary – all published in new English translations, with introductory apparatus and a fairly unified format. This review, which looks at four volumes devoted to writings of three 14th-century German and Dutch writers, Eckhart, Tauler and Ruusbroec, is the first of several appraisals of parts of what has become the heart of the series: the writings of the medieval Christian mystics.<sup>1</sup>

First, some words about the Classics of Western Spirituality series itself are in order. The series enshrines the (questionable) belief that the spiritual experience of totally different cultures (those, say, of fifth-century Egypt, north-eastern American Indians and medieval Judaism) have enough in common to form parts of a single group of “Western classics”. Run from New York by the Paulist Press (SPCK are merely receiving publishers), with a large and impressive editorial board principally drawn from the theology departments of American universities, it attempts to combine academic respectability with contemporary relevance (and on some occasions Catholic orthodoxy with a proper deference to the breadth of the term “spirituality”). Each volume is elaborately presented, with a roster of the editorial board, biographies of each contributor, a preface by one of the board, and sometimes a translator’s foreword, all

preceding an introduction which can run (as it does in both the Eckhart volumes) to 50 pages of closely-written and interesting scholarly discussion. (The introductions are not all so good. Some of Wiseman’s account of Ruusbroec’s thought is too close to paraphrasing – instead of clarifying and contextualizing – the highly lucid treatises we are about to read; Schmidt’s exposition of the place of Tauler in 14th-century Rhenish religiosity is helpful but poorly organized and written.)<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the texts are accompanied by further scholarly discussion in footnotes, and the volumes usually end with bibliographies, often on a grand scale. The element of “relevance” in the presentation of each volume is provided by the didactic nature of most of the texts, by numerous assurances (especially in the prefaces, which would be far better left out) that these writers *are* relevant, and by bright, specially-designed cover illustrations. (These last are seemingly intended to offset the sense of dignity the volumes communicate by indicating that their contents are also powerful and interesting; although they seem a good idea in principle, I find them uniformly displeasing.) Taken in sum, the series displays very clearly the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of contemporary mystics scholarship. On the one hand, there is a fine sense of the importance of mystical experience and mystical writing, an engagement, both scholarly and personal, in the material, and an evangelistic desire to have it as widely read as possible. On the other, there is a perceptible insecurity about the respectability of mystics and mystics studies in church and university (hence the over-elaborate presentation), and a vagueness about wherein the relevance of so diverse a collection consists. Since the series’s ideal readers can not be intended to attempt to follow all the very different paths laid down for them by, for example, Archbishop William Laud, Rabbi Abraham Kook, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the Florentine rabble-rouser Savanarola, it is difficult to see what these writers are supposed, taken together, to be relevant *to*.

Under these circumstances, it would not be difficult to dismiss the series as poorly-conceived, esoteric and faintly comic; but this would be a great pity. In the first place, it has made available a great range of religious writing, much of which was difficult or impossible to read in English before. This can only contribute to our developing understanding both of our own and of other religious cultures. Second, the scholarly presentation of these writings seems always to be up to date, even if it is not invariably as clear as it should be. Third, even in translation many of the works the series has made available are of great interest and beauty, spanning – as most kinds of mystical writing seem to – the gaps between theology, pastoral instruction, personal devotion, and poetry. It is thus worth taking each volume on its merits, and indeed worth taking each contributor on her or his merits.<sup>3</sup> Of the books reviewed in the present article, all seem to have fair or good translations, so far as I can judge.<sup>4</sup> The unostentatious Tauler and Ruusbroec volumes make a useful introduction to those writers,<sup>5</sup> and the two much more ambitious Eckhart volumes are clearly of considerable scholarly importance for the English-speaking world.<sup>6</sup> Eckhart is himself a more original and interesting – and undeniably a more difficult and dangerous – thinker than either his disciple Tauler, or Tauler’s contemporary and perhaps

acquaintance, Ruusbroec, and says almost everything that either of them say, without their restraint and careful orthodoxy. In making most of the following discussion of late-medieval Rhineland and Flemish mysticism revolve around Eckhart, I shall thus be focussing on the spiciest of the trio.

## II

“Meister Eckhart”, as he is always called, c.1260-1329, was one of the most brilliant products of that remarkable flowering of philosophy and theology, the 13th-century scholasticism of the University of Paris. Sent to Paris by his Dominican superiors in Cologne, first probably to study arts, then to acquire his Master’s degree (hence “Meister”), he arrived not long after the departure of Albertus Magnus and the death of his greater pupil Thomas Aquinas – both also Dominicans – and was perhaps there for the condemnation of the philosopher Siger of Brabant for Averroism in 1277, and for the burning of Marguerite Porcete in 1310, for preaching “liberty of the spirit”.<sup>7</sup> In spite of the repressive tendencies which these events portended, and which were to be manifested in Eckhart’s own posthumous condemnation for heresy in 1329, he was thus the inheritor of an academic tradition of great complexity and extraordinary boldness, which had, during the course of a century, built the syllogism and the principle of dialectic reasoning into the great *summae* of theology and philosophy, and achieved what can fairly be described as the first fully systematic theologies of Western Christendom. The same academic tradition also made available to Eckhart the learning of a variety of non-Christian cultures, past and present. Thirteenth-century European scholars could work with a long tradition of Christian neo-Platonism, which developed from some of the writings of Augustine, and from “Dionysius the Areopagite”; they had discovered the world of Arab learning, through Latin translations of Averroes and Avicenna; they had just regained access to more of classical Greek culture, through translations of Arabic versions of several of Aristotle’s works; and some knew of the world of Jewish philosophy and biblical scholarship, through translations of one of Eckhart’s favourite writers, Maimonides. At the same time, Parisian theology remained rooted in the Bible and the works of the Fathers, which together constituted the *auctoritates* who must be quoted in support of propositions in a scholastic “question”.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the fact that much of Eckhart’s writing is in German and does not always have any obvious connection with this complex intellectual milieu, the editors of both Eckhart volumes insist, entirely convincingly, that it is only in terms of this milieu that his thought can be understood. His uncompleted life’s work, the Latin *Opus Tripartitum*, is the bare bones of a synthesis of all the intellectual traditions I have mentioned under the capacious umbrella of Christian neo-Platonism; his German works make a less systematic and academic use of these same traditions. McGinn indeed says, in effect, that it is out of ignorance of this milieu that readers of his German works (the more popular, poetic and approachable part of his output) have so often responded to Eckhart as proto-transcendentalist, pantheist, Buddhist or hippy. By translating Latin and German

works alongside one another, and by expatiating on Eckhart’s intellectual origins in their introductions, McGinn and his collaborators aim to redress the balance and place him back in his medieval Catholic context. It is a testimony both to their skill and to the correctness of their assumptions that Eckhart emerges from their ministrations a more focussed and less mystagogic figure than he has often seemed.

It is the neo-Platonic strain in Eckhart’s thought that has tended to cause most confusion, both in his day and ours; and it is this same Christian neo-Platonism that dominates his mystical thinking, and on which I must accordingly focus here. For him, all of creation is an emanation (*emanatio*, *generatio*, *ebullitio*, Middle High German *uzbruch* = “breakout”) from the divine source or ground (*principium*, MHG *grund*).<sup>9</sup> Mystical ascent, and the purpose of human life in general – no fundamental distinction is admitted between these two concepts by most medieval mystics<sup>10</sup> – can thus be defined as a return (*reditus*, MHG *durchbruch*, *durchbreken* = “breakthrough”) to the source of all. This model is thoroughly Christianized, by Eckhart as by Tauler (c.1300-61), Ruusbroec (1293-1381) and many earlier and later thinkers, through its development in Trinitarian terms. Thus Tauler’s Christmas sermon:

What then should we observe about the paternal generation, and how should we perceive it? Note that the Father, distinct as Father, turns inward to Himself with His divine Intellect and penetrates in clear self-beholding the essential abyss of His eternal Being. In this act of pure self-comprehension He utters Himself completely by a Word; and the Word is His Son. And the act whereby He knows Himself is the generation of the Son in eternity. Thus He rests within Himself in the unity of the essence, and He flows out in the distinction of the Persons.

And so He turns inward, comprehending Himself, and He flows outward in the generation of His Image (that of His Son), which He has known and comprehended. And again He returns to Himself in perfect self-delight. And this delight streams forth as ineffable love, and that ineffable love is the Holy Spirit. Thus God turns inward, goes outward, and returns to Himself again. And these Processions happen for the sake of their return.

(Tauler, pp. 36-7 – the heavy capitalization is less than helpful here.)

The “source” here is the Godhead considered as a unity. The same Godhead, considered now as the Fatherhood, turning inward, understands and “speaks” himself in the Son, who is thus the flowing out of the Godhead. The Son, loving the Father, returns to him, and the love that causes and is generated by this return in both the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. The creation is thus analogous to the begetting of the Son; Eckhart calls the processions within the Trinity “boiling” (*bullitio*), the creation “outboiling” (*ebullitio*) to make this relationship clear.

The relationship is most significant with respect to the creation of humankind in the image of God. All our



writers, like most medieval thinkers, follow Augustine in considering the *imago Dei* to be a specifically Trinitarian image that is “stamped” on the soul or mind; the structure of the human mind thus imitates that of the Trinity. Tauler’s sermon continues:

Now the specific character which the Heavenly Father possesses in this divine circulation should also be adopted by us if we are to attain spiritual motherhood in our soul . . . The soul has three faculties, and in these it is the true image of the Blessed Trinity – memory, understanding, and free will. With their aid the soul is able to grasp God and to partake of Him, so that it becomes capable of receiving all that God is and can bestow. They enable the soul to contemplate eternity, for the soul is created between time and eternity. With its higher part it touches eternity, whereas with its lower part – that of the sensible and animal powers – it is bound up with time. (Tauler, p.37.)

The “higher part” of the mind – the possession of which distinguishes humanity from the rest of the created world – is divided into Memory (*mens*), which is “akin” to the Father, Reason (*ratio, intellectus, aspectus*), akin to the Son, and Will (*affectus, voluntas*), akin to the Holy Spirit. The processes of soul that lead to perfection consist of the achievement of a proper relationship between these three faculties, and between them and their equivalents in the “lower” souls, the “sensible” and “animal” souls (none of the editors seem to me to explain this properly). This leads as it were to a focussing of the energies of the individual in her or his higher part, to the gradual achievement of the virtues, and finally to the radical identification of the soul with that of which it is a copy, as the memory is directed at God, the reason is enlightened by God, and the will is conformed to God.

All these processes are the major subject of Ruusbroec’s most detailed account of the mystical life, *The Spiritual Espousals*, which is a prolonged exposition of Matthew 25.6: “See, the bridegroom is coming. Go out to meet him.”<sup>11</sup> As the soul reattains the image of God which has been effaced by sin, so Christ comes to her as a bridegroom to a bride (“soul” = *anima*, a feminine noun in Latin as in most vernaculars); the soul’s gradual ascent to perfection is indeed a product of Christ’s gracious descent to her (“the bridegroom is coming”), as well as of her own activity (“go out to meet him”).<sup>12</sup> This nuptial imagery is drawn (like so much medieval mystical thought) from spiritual exegesis of the Song of Songs, and Ruusbroec’s blending of this tradition with Augustinian psychological theory and Christian neo-Platonism is extremely deft and intricate. But at the very height of mystical experience, and at the very end of *The Spiritual Espousals*, both nuptial imagery and Trinitarian psychology and theology give way before the negative language of pseudo-Dionysian Platonism, as the soul, which has discovered her essential unity or ground, above or beneath or beyond all its faculties, is united with the Godhead, in that place where the Godhead has no Trinitarian distinctions of persons, and where all the names that might be applied to it are swallowed up in a kind of essential simplicity.<sup>13</sup> As God comprehends himself, so the soul comprehends herself, and can thus receive, “in the abyss of this darkness in which the loving

spirit has died to itself”, an “incomprehensible light”, that of the love and knowledge of God; and, returning that love and knowledge, “the spirit ceaselessly becomes the very resplendence which it receives” (Ruusbroec p.147). The language strains here, partly because of the difficulty of the subject-matter, partly I think because of the conflicting directions which Ruusbroec is being pulled in by the different traditions of mystical thought in which he is working. (Neither Wiseman nor Colledge would probably agree with me here; but it is worth noting that Ruusbroec too was to be attacked for supposedly heretical statements by that mystical scourge of the mystics, the Chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson (1363-1429). Nonetheless, the last words of the work are a magnificent fusion both of poetry with theology and of the different demands made by an extremely sophisticated theological position. They describe the “active meeting” of the persons of the Trinity with one another and the soul:

Now this active meeting and this loving embrace are in their ground blissful and devoid of particular form, for the fathomless, modeless being of God is so dark and devoid of particular form that it encompasses within itself all the divine modes and the activity and properties of the Persons in the rich embrace of the essential Unity; it therefore produces a divine state of blissful enjoyment in this abyss of the ineffable. Here there is a blissful crossing over and a self-transcending immersion into a state of essential bareness, where all the divine names and modes and all the living ideas which are reflected in the mirror of divine truth all pass away into simple ineffability, without mode and without reason. In this fathomless abyss of simplicity all things are encompassed in a state of blissful blessedness, while the ground itself remains completely uncomprehended, unless it be through the essential Unity. Before this the Persons must give way, together with all the lives in God, for here there is nothing other than an eternal state of rest in a blissful embrace of loving immersion.

This is that modeless being which all fervent interior spirits have chosen above all things, that dark stillness in which all lovers lose their way. But if we could prepare ourselves through virtue in the ways I have shown, we would at once strip ourselves of our bodies and flow into the wild waves of the Sea, from which no creature could ever draw us back.

That we might blissfully possess the essential Unity and clearly contemplate the Unity in the Trinity – may the divine love grant us this, for it turns no beggar away. Amen. (Ruusbroec p.152 – this is fine translating.)

A hundred pages of treatise have prepared this conclusion, and Ruusbroec was to spend much of the rest of his writing career explaining himself, but this is still as lucid a description of mystical union from within this particular nexus of theological traditions as we have.

To a modern reader, the descriptions of spiritual union given by Eckhart and his more cautious disciple Tauler may not seem to differ in important ways from Ruusbroec’s. Yet Eckhart was condemned by a papal

commission at Avignon, whereas Ruusbroec, in spite of Gerson's attack, remained and remains highly respected. There may be more than theological reasons for this discrepancy between two careers. Ruusbroec's treatises were initially written for small numbers of people, while Eckhart's German works are largely sermons, given publicly, some to large audiences; he was a natural candidate for suspicious scrutiny by local ecclesiastical officials. Eckhart made a dangerous attempt to expound in popular form, and in the vernacular, doctrines that are part of a daring theological system that he had not fully worked out in Latin. Having breathed some of the headier airs of Paris, he did not share Ruusbroec's political and spiritual fear of error and sweeping statement (there is something of Peter Abelard in him). Moreover, he seems not to have handled his own defence with the skill it needed. Colledge (in his fine account of the historical background to Eckhart's writing in the 1981 volume) seems a little contemptuous of his ineptitude, and suggests that his popularity had weakened his intellectual powers. My own equally vague but kinder speculation is that the attacks on Eckhart focussed the tension between his emphasis on the freedom of the individual soul and his desire to be an orthodox, obedient, and hence very much *not* "free", member of the Catholic church, and that this tension proved intolerable. For Ruusbroec, the tension is much less, since orthodoxy, or at least the will to orthodoxy, is an integral part of his mysticism, and he is not much interested in the metaphor of freedom.

Nonetheless, there are important theological differences between Eckhart and Ruusbroec, which are products partly of Eckhart's more complex intellectual background,<sup>14</sup> partly of a different balance between the various traditions of mystical thought in which he is working. Where Ruusbroec writes of the marriage of Christ and the soul, Eckhart (and after him, always more cautiously, Tauler) speaks of the birth of Christ in the soul, and means by it something more than mere metaphor. McGinn explains this better than I can:

Since the Father gives birth to the Son in eternity, and since there can be no temporal dimension in God, he is always giving birth to the Son; and since God's ground is one with the soul's ground [i.e. the soul's source is the ground of the Godhead, the place from where the Father "utters" the Son], the eternal Father must always be giving birth to the Son within the ground of the soul. Yet more, "He gives me birth, me, his Son and the same Son" [i.e. I am begotten of God both like and *as* the Son] . . . Given the identity of the soul's ground and God's ground, the just man must take part in the inner life of the Trinity, the divine *bullitio* itself . . . As *Sermon 22* says, "He everlastingly bore me, his only-born Son, into that same image of his eternal Fatherhood, that I may be Father and give birth to him of whom I am born . . . And as he gives birth to his Only-Begotten Son into me, so I give him birth again into the Father." (McGinn in Eckhart 1981, p.51.)

This may sound bizarre. The basic metaphor has its origin in tropological (moral) exegesis of the Nativity, in which an obvious homiletic ploy (so Tauler in *Sermon 1*, following a long tradition) is to expound the narrative of the Incarnation along the lines of "cast out our sin and

enter in, be born in us this night". But Eckhart perceives this commonplace in neo-Platonic terms, and argues that our return to God must be accomplished by the recognition of our radical identity with the Godhead, and hence by the repetition of the birth of the Son and the procession of the Spirit in our souls. Indeed, "repetition" here is less than accurate. Since God exists in eternity, his creation, although temporal in itself, "has always" existed in eternity as well, as has every moment that passes in the created universe. God creates the universe perpetually, just as the Father begets the Son perpetually, and these eternal activities are both expressions of the same divine simplicity, just as the soul's ground is the same as God's ground. Thus the soul is a part of the ground in which the Father begets the Son actually and "now", that is, in eternity; the soul "is" the Son, in that she is an expression of the creativity within the Godhead that is begotten as the Son; while in realizing these facts radically in herself by "emptying herself" of the created world, she herself begets the Son, achieving what Tauler called "motherhood" in *Sermon 1* quoted above, and what Eckhart more radically calls fatherhood, i.e. identity with the Father. The soul does not merely resemble God in consisting of "powers" which correspond statically to the Trinity; she contains an activity of "boiling" (*bullitio*) which actually intermingles with the eternal "boiling" of the Godhead.

By stressing the soul's source in the ground of the Godhead where Ruusbroec concentrates much more on the traditional themes of the alienation from God caused by the Fall, Eckhart seems to commit himself to a more Dionysian, less Augustinian, version of Christian neo-Platonism. This affects the whole of his account of humanity and the return of the soul to God. Where Ruusbroec speaks of the gradual adornment of the soul as she acquires the requisite virtues, Eckhart tends to use the apophatic language of stripping, so that the soul empties herself of the created world, and ultimately even of her desire for God (see note 8 above); a key concept for him is detachment (MHG *abegescheidenheit*). Where for Ruusbroec evil is a constant danger, so that the soul must fear for her own safety every step of the way – herein is a source of his anxious balancing both of concepts and of counsels – Eckhart perceives evil merely as "nothing" or non-being. This is part of the ground of the confidence with which the souls he describes seem to reascend to God, and enables him to make statements that were perceived as heretical by the Avignon commissioners, but which would seem to form a logical part of Christian theodicy, however little regard they have for the temporal realities of evil: for example, that God is glorified as much by an evil action as by a good one. Again, whereas union with the Godhead "beyond" the Trinity is still a profoundly Trinitarian event for Ruusbroec, involving all the powers of the soul and all the Persons "embraced" – not annihilated – in God's essential Unity, in Eckhart's writing the final union with God takes place on a ground where both the soul's and God's tripartite natures have become irrelevant:

That is why I say that if a man will turn away from himself and from all created things, by so much will you be made one and blessed in the spark of the soul, which has never touched either time or place. This spark rejects all created things, and wants nothing but

its naked God, as he is in himself. It is not content with the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit, or with the three Persons so far as each of them persists in his properties. I say truly that this light is not content with the divine nature's generative or fruitful qualities. I will say more, surprising though this is. I speak in all truth, truth that is eternal and enduring, that this same light is not content with the simple divine essence in its repose, as it neither gives nor receives; but it wants to know the source of this essence, it wants to go into the simple ground, into the quiet desert, into which distinction never gazed, not the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. In the innermost part, where no one dwells, there is contentment for that light, and there it is more inward than it can be to itself, for this ground is a simple silence, in itself immovable, and by this immovability all things are moved, all life is received by those who in themselves have rational being. (*German Sermons* 48, Eckhart 1981 p.198.)

The *scintilla* which is the "highest part" of the soul (MHG *vunkelin* etc.) seeks its home beyond the Persons, beyond even the Unity of the Persons, in the "simple silence" of God.

Eckhart's mysticism is more Platonic and more dangerous than Ruusbroec's largely because he takes a tradition of thought shared by both further and in more literal directions. Other writers stress the unity of God without undermining Christian Trinitarianism; other Christian writers share Eckhart's Platonic view that everything created has its exemplar in the divine essence, without arguing, as Eckhart does, that part of the soul is so closely enmeshed with God that it can be spoken of as uncreated; other writers are more cautious about pressing the analogy between the birth of the Word and the process whereby Christ enters the soul. It is not, perhaps, surprising that Eckhart was condemned. Late medieval thought was juggling many kinds of intellectual tradition, and was being made forcibly aware of the centrifugal tendencies in all of them, as heresy followed heresy, and as competing systems of thought and feeling within the Church strove to identify one another as heretical.<sup>15</sup> The intellectual space in which doctrinal positions could be enunciated was becoming rapidly smaller. In such a situation intellectual balance and the ability to subordinate ideas to a coherent and orthodox system (qualities possessed by Ruusbroec and Tauler, and to an outstanding degree by Aquinas) were inevitably becoming more favoured and less dangerous qualities than flair and theological originality. (At least, these qualities were more favoured from an institutional perspective. Readers and writers continued to favour Eckhart in spite of his official condemnation, and, for the next 200 years and more, German mystical theology was to remain deeply imbued with Eckhartian thought. His imagination, his dazzling performances on the brink of meaninglessness and heresy, fulfilled a real and important need.)

Must we regard Eckhart as in some sense a Christian heretic? This question is taken deeply seriously in the 1981 volume, whose editors seem to want to rehabilitate Eckhart, but are profoundly uneasy about his lack of caution.<sup>16</sup> Roman Catholic medievalists such as Colledge

and McGinn, who rightly perceive their ecclesiastical institutions and doctrinal structures to be closely related to medieval ones, are likely to be more concerned about this question than others. Still, it has general interest for the study of a period in which the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy were so rapidly realigning themselves around the Church's institutions, and becoming coercive metaphors directed at ensuring political and ideological obedience. On this level, Eckhart probably *is* heretical, like any other writer who relies heavily on the language of freedom, and who gives ecclesiastical institutions so small a place in the reunion between God and the soul's divine *scintilla*.

But I think we might also regard Eckhart as heretical in a more sophisticated sense, having the vested interest we all have in another kind of institution, that of language; for it seems to me that his most "dangerous" quality does not reside in any of his formulations themselves, but in his manner of making formulations, and in the assumptions about language that underlie that manner. These are deeply self-contradictory. In some contexts he seems to regard words as spiritual, rather than mundane, entities, and invests them with a high degree of significance. For example, his biblical commentaries make much play with the metaphysical meanings of grammatical structures, interpreting "I am who I am" with the aid of the grammarian Priscian: "Note that the term 'am' is here the predicate of the proposition where God says 'I am', and it is in the second position. As often as it occurs, it signifies that pure naked existence is the subject . . ." (1986, p.45). Here the structure of the signifier (taking this as the whole statement) is so similar to that which is signified (the nature of God) that a whole set of metaphysical, and apparently "exact" correspondences can be adduced. In other contexts, such as the German sermon quoted above, he seems to invest his own words as a preacher with a comparable absoluteness; "I speak in all truth, truth that is eternal and enduring" at least suggests, even if it does not actually state ("I speak *in* truth" not "I speak *the* truth"), that Eckhart's formulation of truth is also "eternal and enduring" and can be described as "truth".

But if we look further we find that this apophatic mystic also has a profound and very "Dionysian" distrust of language: holding, for example, that all propositions we can make about God are false (1986 p.19 etc.). If all such propositions are indeed false, it does not matter what we say about God – or rather, our primary responsibility in talking about God ceases to be that our words be true, and becomes that they be effective in raising ourselves and our audience up to the unspeakable Godhead. Language becomes a strategic medium; theology becomes rhetoric. This happens after a fashion every time a sermon is preached; but in Eckhart's preaching and writing it is taken so far that all his theological pronouncements can from one perspective be seen as relative, made for the purpose of achieving a particular and momentary effect, not because they are part of any consistent system. In the passage quoted above, for example, Eckhart states that the soul is not content even with "the simple divine essence in its repose", but desires to go "into the simple ground, into the quiet desert". This is wonderfully beautiful, but what does it mean? McGinn suggests that the theme of "going

beyond the essence of God” is to be understood in connection with passages of Eckhart’s Latin *Parisian Questions*, in which he claims that “intelligence” is a more “essential” property of God than being itself (1981 p.32). Thus in this passage the soul rises beyond the proposition *Esse Deus est* to the proposition *Intelligere Deus est*. Yet elsewhere Eckhart assumes the primacy of being, and does not distinguish the “divine essence” from “the quiet desert”. It seems to me that the reason that he does so here is not primarily theological (in spite of McGinn’s useful gloss) but rhetorical, even fictional. Eckhart wants to stress the radical distinction between the Trinity and the simplicity of God, and to have the soul he is describing travel upwards for as long as possible; it is a good way of conveying God’s immutability and simplicity to claim that even the term “being” is too active and differentiated to express the divine nature. But if what we are reading here is fiction not theology, is this not also the case when Eckhart describes the soul giving birth to the Son and becoming the Trinity? I stated above that his thinking here is literal rather than metaphorical, for he frequently states that this birth categorically *is* the Incarnation, and no mere enactment of it. However, what is the meaning of the word “literal”, and what force does the verb “to be” have in a language which is incapable of making true statement about God? Eckhart’s assertions that things are “literally”, “actually”, “essentially” true, must in the context of his apophatic thought be taken as no more than metaphoric flourishes, for all language is reduced to metaphor. The combination in Eckhart’s writing of bold, authoritative theorizing about the nature of God, claims that words (including his words) can describe God, and contradictory claims that they cannot, seems to me to be distinctly “dangerous” – whether or not we would want to call it heretical in any sense. It frees the speaker, for whom language can be an instrument of speculation and manipulation; but it thoroughly enslaves the hearer or reader, who is supposed to take the words as authoritatively true. For the moment – until someone shows me that this train of thought is invalid – I share Colledge’s distrust of Eckhart.

Eckhart, Ruusbroec and Tauler are representatives of one of the most intriguing moments in the development of mystical theology, whose writings can focus for us a number of fundamental issues: the nature of religious language, the nature of religious orthodoxy, the relationship between theological models and mystical experience. As 14th-century writers, they belong to what is still, for most educated people, a Dark Age (originally so-called by an era which had christened itself the “Enlightenment”) lost to contemporary culture. These four volumes should go a small part of the way to reclaiming that age for readers who live in an era with which it has much in common.

#### NOTES

1. In future reviews I hope to discuss some of the theological works of medieval and 16th-century women (Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa and Teresa of Avila), the writings of the medieval English mystics, and some of the major works in the Victorine and Franciscan traditions, using the Classics of Western Spirituality as starting-points.
2. Academics writing for non-specialist readers need to be carefully controlled, as they have not been by the general editors of this series. The introductions and apparatus consequently display a good deal of bad, obfuscatory writing, much confusion as to what knowledge can truly be called “common”, and uncertainty as to who the reader is supposed to be.
3. For example one would never guess from Huston Smith’s rambling and silly preface to the 1981 Eckhart volume – all about the corrupting powers of scientific thinking – how much better everything else in the book was going to be. The facts (as his biographical blurb has them) that he has written a best seller, made films about Eastern mysticism, and discovered that Tibetan lamas

can sing chords, can hardly be considered to qualify him to introduce a volume of difficult mystical writing from a *Western* spiritual tradition. In presenting one of the major volumes in their series with this kind of stuff, it seems to me that the Paulists demean themselves, their editors, and their readers.

4. I am not in a position to comment on the accuracy of translations from Middle High German and Dutch, except in so far as the results seem convincing, and I have not had access to the Latin works of Eckhart in the edition from which Colledge and McGinn translate. These are very decided limitations in dealing with mystical writing, in which details of wording are so often all-important.
5. The Tauler volume translates 23 of about 80 sermons printed in *Die Predigten Taulers*, edited by Ferdinand Vetter (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters XI: Berlin, 1910) – I assume this to have been the text chosen for the translations, although this is nowhere stated. (The recent *Johannes Tauler Opera Omnia* – Olms, Hildesheim, 1985 – a reprint of Laurentius Surius’s 1548 Latin translation of Tauler – may also be of interest; it prints a number of Tauler treatises, now considered inauthentic but still worth reading.) The Ruusbroec volume translates four treatises – *The Spiritual Espousals*, *The Sparking Stone*, *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness* and *The Little Book of Clarification*, about half of everything he wrote – from the 1944-48 edition of the *Werken*, edited by the Ruusbroecgenootschap (four volumes, Leiden: E. J. Brill). This edition, and the present Ruusbroec volume, will eventually be superseded by the Ruusbroecgenootschap’s new and definitive *Opera Omnia*, to be published in 10 volumes (there are two so far), containing the Middle Dutch texts, good modern English traditions, and a 16th-century Latin translation – a model publishing venture, which will be of fundamental importance for medievalists and religious historians as well as for those interested in Ruusbroec’s work for its own sake.
6. The two Eckhart volumes translate Latin commentaries (1981 and 1986), Latin sermons (1986), German treatises (1981) and sermons (1981 and 1986); the 1981 volume also presents a number of documents relating to Eckhart’s examination for heresy, while the 1986 volume contains the first English translation (I think) of a pseudo-Eckhartian treatise, *Sister Catherine*. Generally speaking, translations are from the yet-incomplete definitive edition of Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, edited by J. Quint and J. Koch, *et al.*, under the direction of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1936-).
7. Siger is rehabilitated by Dante in *Paradiso*, canto 10, where Aquinas, one of his chief persecutors in life, introduces him to Dante in the fiery rings of theologians and philosophers in the sphere of the sun. Marguerite Porete’s witty and very heretical *Le Miroir des simples ames* survived the Middle Ages, and even flourished, mainly by becoming attached to the name of a different Margaret, the saint-queen of Hungary, whose orthodoxy was unquestionable. (Wiseman’s introduction has a fairly useful introduction to the “free spirit” heresy.) Eckhart was not in Paris continuously from the 1270’s on, but seems to have returned to Cologne from some time before 1280 to about 1294, before pursuing the long master’s degree in theology in his 30s and 40s.
8. A typical “question” (*quaestio*) might go like this. Question: whether God is a Spirit? 1) It seems that God is a Spirit. Syllogistic “objections” to this proposition, with an authoritative saying (*auctoritas*) as one of the terms of the syllogism. Conclusion: it seems God is not a Spirit. 2) On the other hand (*contra*) there are reasons for saying that he is; a syllogism proving the proposition that God is a Spirit, and contradicting the “objections”. 3) I reply (*respondeo dicendum*), usually by making a distinction (*distinctio*) which reconciles proposition and objections. 4) Further replies to each objection. In Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, a *quaestio* may consist of several such questions, each of which is termed an “article”. Eckhart makes much use of this method of argument in his commentaries and other Latin works. The method partly grew out of Abelard’s controversial treatise *Sic et Non*, in which he showed that the Fathers contradict one another at every point by juxtaposing contradictory patristic *sententiae* on a large array of subjects – thus focussing the need for a more contextualized and sophisticated treatment of the *auctoritates*. The *quaestio* thus caters both for the medieval respect of authority and for the growing late-medieval desire to build large logical structures and to admit a degree of scepticism into academic discussions.
9. The 1986 Eckhart volume has a useful glossary of Eckhart’s Latin and German technical terms; one hopes that future editors of translations from the mystics will follow suit. The fact that *principium* can mean “ground” or “source” enables Eckhart, following a tradition that goes back to Ambrose, to expound the first verse of Genesis as “Is the principle God created heaven and earth” (the Vulgate has “In principio”), thus making the verse describe the Platonic doctrine of ideal forms (Eckhart 1981 p.83 etc.).
10. Mystics merely do in a systematic way in this life what other elect souls do more dispersedly and only complete in eternity, that is, unite themselves with God. Because mystical activity is thought of as “normal” in the Middle Ages, it is frequently in works on mysticism that the most serious discussions of the human psyche take place; this is true, for example, of Richard of St. Victor’s *Benjamin* treatises, which profoundly influenced Ruusbroec and many others. In reading Ruusbroec (and to a lesser extent Eckhart and Tauler), we are thus reading a medieval psychologist for whom the delineation of the way the mind works is crucial, since on its correctness depends the usefulness of what he writes in helping the reader achieve union with God. In spite of the numerous and confusing distinctions Ruusbroec draws – no merely triadic *id, ego and super ego* for him – this is a decided bonus for the modern reader.
11. The exegesis divides the verse into four clauses, and then expounds the verse, clause by clause, three times: with respect to the Active Life in Book 1, to the Interior Life in Book 2, and to the Contemplative Life in the brief Book 3. The verse is thus made to cover the whole of the ascent to God. The “division” of the verse in this way is a method of exposition used in scholastic preaching – an important point Wiseman should have made, since it suggests that Ruusbroec thought of his treatise as a kind of sermon. (Compare Ruusbroec’s method with those used in Eckhart’s commentaries, which will interest, and probably puzzle, modern exegetes.)

12. i.e. The ascent to God is a product both of grace and of works, both of activity and of passivity. The extent to which the mystic acted and the extent to which she or he was acted upon was fiercely argued over. Ruusbroec insists, against a loosely-defined group of mystics now known as "the Brethren of the Free Spirit" (ancestors of the Quietist movement), the most important of whom was Marguerite Porete, that *action* characterizes the whole process of ascent. Eckhart was condemned in 1329 partly because his own doctrine too much resembled the Free Spirit heresy; he held that to achieve the summit of felicity, the soul must give up all her own desires, including the desire to be saved and the desire not to have sinned. As Colledge points out (Eckhart 1981, pp.13-14), this is entirely orthodox as it stands, in spite of the papal condemnation.
13. One must use Dionysian language in describing the final stage of mystical ascent. To grasp the concepts which underlie these metaphors, it is useful to know that pseudo-Dionysius wrote a treatise called *The Divine Names*, in which he describes the names that might legitimately be applied to God, and another treatise, *The Mystical Theology*, in which he describes an ascent to God which consists of recognizing that God does *not* consist of any of the names that are applied to him, but is more than all of them. In *The Mystical Theology* – the first and most influential account of apophatic mysticism (the *via negativa*) – God is as it were stripped of his names, until at the end of the work the reader is left in a wordless state which can alone truly capture something of God's nature. Ruusbroec in effect imitates this ending at the end of *The Spiritual Espousals*, quoted below. Eckhart was condemned in 1329 for too literal an understanding of the idea that God "is not" all the names that are applied to him. Whereas Aquinas believed that God's names are "real", in that they are true expressions of parts of his infinitely rich and various nature, Eckhart (influenced by Maimonides) held that it is only the human intellect that perceives distinctions in the essential simplicity of God – a stance that does not necessarily sit easily with his Trinitarianism. (See Eckhart 1986, pp.18ff. for McGinn's comments, which I partly follow.)
14. Ruusbroec seems to have trained for the priesthood in Brussels until his ordination at the age of 24, but thereafter to have had no formal education.
15. For example Pope John XXII, under whose supervision the investigation and condemnation of Eckhart took place, was also responsible for the destruction of the ideological heart of the Franciscan movement. His 1317 Bull *Sancta Romana et Universalis Ecclesia* condemned the radical Franciscan interpretation of Francis's doctrine of poverty – the doctrine which above all made the order distinctive and essentially uninstitutionalized – and thereby virtually created the heresy of the Spiritual Franciscan "Fratricelli".
16. In the 1986 volume, in which Colledge has no part, McGinn seems somewhat less anxious about Eckhart's orthodoxy, and indeed prints a very obviously heretical treatise called *Sister Catherine*, often ascribed to Eckhart but not by him, as evidence of his continuing importance in German mystical writing. Admittedly he does try to show that *Sister Catherine* can be seen as orthodox, but this in itself entails a substantial stretching of the idea of orthodoxy from that assumed in the 1981 volume.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Genesis 37-50. A Commentary

Claus Westermann. SPCK, 1987. Pp. 269. £30.00

Principal Robert Rainy of New College, Edinburgh, is reputed on one occasion to have said to his students regarding a particular book, "Sell your bed and buy it!". Few, if any of them, can have taken this advice literally, or ever have thought that they might be called upon to make such a self-denying choice. However this third volume of the English translation of the magnificent Genesis commentary by Claus Westermann means that the total cover price for the three volumes now comes to only a little short of £100.00 so that the threat of near monastic poverty may be thought to face the prospective buyer. Such a purchaser, whether a librarian or a private scholar, is therefore entitled to some reassurance that a commentary on this scale, and in such a format, really is worth the cost.

Certainly it is not difficult to give such an assurance on the grounds that it replaces all other available commentaries on Genesis in English and that it offers a remarkably comprehensive treatment of the book. This must undoubtedly be among the very "best buys" of current writings on the books of the Old Testament. Not least is this so because of the unique importance of the book of Genesis within the biblical canon. Fundamental aspects of the doctrine of creation, of man, as well as of the origin and destiny of Israel, are all to be found here. The format of the series is now well established comprising a fresh translation, backed up by extensive textual and philological comment, and a full treatment of the text in regard to literary, historical and theological questions. The bibliographical coverage is remarkably full, both for primary and secondary literature, and is set out in separate sections, thereby avoiding any one over-long listing. This helps in general tidiness, but does mean that some care is needed to ensure that one is looking in the right place to find a particular work.

This third volume of Genesis deals with the Joseph story of chapters 37-50 which has become the subject of several separate studies having a bearing on Pentateuchal criticism generally. These relate to the issue of whether the series of stories contain sufficient historical details to show how it was that Israel's ancestors came to find themselves in Egypt and who the historical Joseph might have been. Nineteenth century scholarship was very attracted to the hypothesis that Joseph was in some way connected with the Hyskos dynasty of Egyptian kings, and now very recently the claim has been made in a book by Ahmed Osman that the very mummy of Joseph has been identified in a Cairo museum in the figure of Yuya.

Westermann is rightly sceptical about all such historicising efforts to fix the basis of the stories. Although they concern actual historical figures, they are akin to a family novel and he would class them as "belles lettres". From a source-critical perspective Westermann fully upholds the claims of critics, such as W. Rudolph (whose name is misspelt as W. Rudolf on pp. 19 and 20, although elsewhere it is correct), that the cycle of Joseph stories falls wholly outside the J, E and P source

documents. Such an assessment must assuredly be correct and further strengthens the contention that this sequence of stories of independent origin has been woven onto the end of the saga of the patriarchs in order to fashion a bridge to the story of exodus. The evidence of the P author's fitting in of the Joseph material is to be found in chapters 37 and 46-50.

Westermann is also able to give substantial attention to the claim initiated by G. von Rad that the Joseph story-cycle was deeply imbued with wisdom characters and themes. He accepts some elements of this claim, but, as is characteristic of his generally guarded critical approach, recognizes that it has often been rashly exaggerated. There is much that is uncharacteristic of wisdom also present in the stories and such a feature as Joseph's skill in dream interpretation is more a popular folk-motif than a fundamental goal of the wise.

Overall there is so much that is good in this three-volume commentary that its worth is hard to over-state. It should undoubtedly last for a very long time as a standard work. It inevitably invites some comparison with the pioneering commentary on Genesis by Hermann Gunkel of 1901. Certainly Westermann's work is a worthy successor to the earlier one. Having said this, however, it is necessary to recognize the very different character of the two commentaries, which reflects the very different situation in which biblical scholarship is placed in 1988 from where it was in 1901. It is in many respects this difference which accounts for the far greater length of Westermann's work and the different approach adopted. Gunkel's commentary was pioneering, sometimes idiosyncratic, and little concerned to summarise and evaluate the work of other scholars. Westermann's is comprehensive and deeply involved in the debates that other scholars have raised at almost every section of the book. It offers a balanced critique, a concern to draw together and combine different insights and approaches, and a determined effort to single out the most convincing results of a century of critical work on Genesis. If it is less original than Gunkel's work was in its day, it is more convincing and better able to establish a kind of scholarly plateau on which future studies can proceed. It certainly deserves a very high rating indeed as a contribution to Old Testament research. Even allowing that Principal Rainy could be guilty of hyperbole, this is undoubtedly the kind of book he had in mind. It should certainly last for more than a generation of students. Nor should the immense labours in translation of all three volumes by Fr. John Scullion S.J. of Newman College, Melbourne, be overlooked. The translator has an almost thankless task since the best he can hope for is to come very close to the original from which he has worked. Certainly the translation reads very fluently and gives every confidence as to its accuracy and clarity. This is a commentary that deserves to be read, and ought not to be left to gather dust on library shelves.

Ronald E. Clements

## **Backward into Light. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus according to Matthew and Mark**

J. L. Houlden. SCM, 1987. Pp. x + 84. £3.95

Would that there were more Lenten reading and Passiontide meditation of this kind, recognising the connections between spiritual and intellectual stimulus! The relationship is established not only in the manner and methods of the book, but also forms part of the substance of the discussion (in the perception of God's movement towards us, the perception of faith as suggestion, and the nature of post-critical spirituality). The book began as Holy Week lectures in a theological college, and those who know Professor Houlden will not be surprised at the amount of food for thought which he can offer in so small a compass. A whole course of study on modern methods of approaching the Bible, and the way of maintaining a judicious balance between them, is outlined in these pages.

As the sub-title indicates, the basis of the book is a comparison between Mark's and Matthew's accounts of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection. On the working assumption that Matthew used Mark, attention is drawn both to small variations and to special material in Matthew, which can be related to Matthew's overall tendencies in his gospel. Matthew's changes are not so trivial as might appear. He clarifies Mark's account, offering detail and explanation; he makes the story more spectacular and stupendous. He introduces the principle of requital ("the Son of man . . . will repay every man for what he has done" – 16.27) and shows it in action in the case of Judas (27.3-10). And by the episode of the soldiers who secure the tomb and then have to be bribed to cover up the truth, Matthew offers a proof and demonstration of the Resurrection that only falls short of the account in the apocryphal gospel of Peter.

This is not simply an exercise in redaction criticism. For the modern reader of the narrative can see Matthew embodying opposite theological tendencies to Mark. And through the ensuing Christian traditions, we find ourselves caught in the tensions between them: "The perception of God's movement towards us . . . in terms not of 'gift' . . . but of 'assault' by spectacular force; the perception of the ultimate morality of the universe in terms not of the power-weakness of a loving . . . God, but of deserts to be enforced by sanctions; and the perception of faith in terms not of gracious suggestion . . . but of sealed and impregnable demonstration." These comparisons work to Matthew's discredit, even though such developments can be justified historically within the life of the church.

There is a real tension in the general argument here, not just between historical and literary (structural) methods of reading the texts, but also between the reconstruction of historical contexts (which are local and particular) and the drawing of general morals (which are issues of theological and ethical principle). Furthermore Professor Houlden has a tendency to make a virtue out of the fact of inconsistencies in Mark's narrative, while construing inconsistencies in Matthew as a vice. Matthew stands accused of a readiness to settle for what

is less than the best. But as the author acknowledges, other interpretations of the intentions could well be different, because they are based on different value judgements.

I must confess to a particular puzzlement about Matthew's use of apocalyptic images. By editorial rearrangement Mt 24 is made consistently supernatural in reference, compared with Mk 13. And in many ways throughout the gospel he could be said to heighten the supernatural element. But the cause of this is apparently not an urgent eschatological concern within an apocalyptic community (although the notion of eternal punishment, introduced with the principle of requital, sounds like the desire for vengeance typical of such a community). Instead the apocalyptic ideas function, like literary devices, to intensify and compel belief, within a community which has a clearer sense of its own long-term purpose and historical perspective. Surely it is oversimplifying to compare this "church-realism" of Matthew with Mark's "purity of eschatology", if Mark's concern is with discipleship in the new crisis of Nero's persecution or the Jewish revolt.

But it is less appropriate to engage in minute academic debate, if the purpose of this book is to suggest how the evangelists contribute to the wider process of faith today. Professor Houlden speaks of a frontier between prayer and theology, but encourages more traffic across the frontier. To adapt another poem by Edwin Muir (who is quoted in the title) about another border:

What shall avail me/When I reach the border?  
Strange I shall hale me/To that strange land.

We are less ill-prepared, with books like this to show us the way across.

John M. Court

## **Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts. The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology**

Philip F. Esler. CUP, 1987. SNTS Monograph Series 57. Pp. xv + 270. £25.00 (hb)

As is well known, sociology is a bogus science taught by leftie academics to long-haired students unwilling to undertake work like learning Hebrew; its concepts are ill-defined and its theories reductionist, being based either on vague diachronic likenesses, or on questionnaires telling us things we already knew. Yet here is Dr. Philip Esler, an Australian barrister with an Oxford D.Phil. in Theology, suggesting that sociology is the key to understanding Luke-Acts; and a very interesting book he has written too.

First century Christianity, he says, was a sect separating itself from a church, Judaism; and a consistent feature of such separations is the need to *legitimate*, to provide a universe of meaning to life which can compete with that of the rejected church. Luke's books were written for his own community of Christians around 90, and that community contained a good number of Jews,



some of whom are always converted in Acts. To these Jews it was the habit of a lifetime not to eat with Gentiles, for reasons of purity; so an important theme of Acts is the legitimation of table-fellowship – Peter, the leading Jewish Christian, went and ate with Cornelius, and Paul stayed with Lydia and Titius Justus, and ate with his ex-gaoler. To such Jews the Law was God’s Law: so Luke legitimates the Church’s attitude to the Law. Luke was conservative and consistent about it: it was valid, and everyone decent kept it through Gospel and Acts, especially Paul – only it was not enough for salvation, the awaited redemption through the Messiah Jesus. Jews, and especially Diaspora Jews, loved their Temple; so Luke legitimates a positive attitude to the Temple too. The whole Gospel story started there, and Jesus went there for cleansing after his birth and before his death; and Peter and Paul alike honoured it. Only Stephen drew attention to its limitations, being man-made (like idols in LXX); and this line will have appealed to Gentile Christians who had been excluded from its inner courts, and who might not grieve at its destruction. Luke’s congregation also contained middle-class well-heeled members, and beggars (*ptōchoi*); and his Gospel draws from this the force of its demand that the first should sell their property for the needs of the second. It contained Roman officials too, centurions and the like, and the stress on Roman toleration of Jesus and Paul arises from the need to legitimate the Church to these church-members, not to outsiders. The book has some other interesting suggestions too. It looks as if Peter is given the credit for bringing the first Gentile into the Church so as to reassure Jewish church-members – very likely the offence of the Hellenists, which is being so assiduously covered over in the story of the widows’ neglect, was that the first Gentiles were admitted by them.

Some of all this must be right, and even if we were conscious of it before, the sociological angle certainly sharpens it, and reproves our patronising and neglect of the subject till yesterday. Especially the sections on the Temple and the “Roman” church-members seemed to me convincing. Other parts raise questions. Table-fellowship was surely a hot potato in the 40s and 50s; but, as was observed in “Yes, Prime Minister”, with time a hot potato becomes a cold potato. Were people still agonising about it two generations later? No doubt there were Jews in Luke’s church at its foundation, but had any more come in since? Furthermore, at one point (p. 107) Esler sees Luke as justifying matters to his Christian contemporaries more widely – if so, could we not do without the dubious arguments for a considerable Jewish element in his own community? I do not think Luke is consistent over the Law, though he tries hard. At Lk. 16.17 it is eternally valid, but in Acts 15 Jews have found its yoke unsupportable, and it is revoked almost in its entirety for Gentiles.

I do not think the section on rich and poor is in focus. The poor in the Great Supper parable represent the Jewish church, and the Jerusalem church was poor; hence the great Collection. The later Ebionites derived their name and poverty from the communal living of Acts 2–4 (Epiphanius, Pan. 30.17.2), and Luke’s comments on poverty should be read in this context rather than that of his own church. As for the rich, Luke adopts the tactic of bidding up the price of salvation: it costs all you have at

14.33, half with Zacchaeus, but generous alms suffice at 11.41. Also it does not help the argument for Esler to keep implying that exegetes who disagree with him do so because of their middle class origins!

Esler can be faulted in other ways. He sometimes forces a weak argument – *kairoi ethnōn* does not mean “the ages of the Gentiles”; a priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan would be poor symbols of the synagogue in Luke’s day; the attempted lynching of Jesus in Lk. 4 is hardly a reflection of Luke’s own day. He is sometimes rather superior to other scholars. But none of this should distract from the fact that he has written a creative thesis, and one that should be widely read.

Michael Goulder

## Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology

Gerd Theissen, T. & T. Clark, 1987. Pp. xiii + 433. £19.95

While the leadership of New Testament studies, held, apparently unassailably, by the Germans since the advent of historical scholarship, has now passed to North America, the work of Gerd Theissen indicates that the great German tradition is capable of renewal from within. After his initial studies in Hebrews and the gospel tradition, Theissen made his name with penetrating sociological studies of the Jesus tradition and of early Pauline Christianity. These works are marked by a combination of the rigorous use of historical-critical methods and the judicious application of sociological models, underpinned by a wide knowledge of the ancient world, both Jewish and Graeco-Roman. In addition, for the discerning reader, he has not turned his back on the question of the theological relevance of early Christian texts. The hints in his exegetical work on how he relates his critical studies to his theology (including the question of the challenge of psychology to faith) can be followed up in *On Having a Critical Faith* (SCM, 1979) and *Biblical Faith. An Evolutionary Approach* (SCM, 1984). Most recently he has produced a brilliant narrative account of the impact of the historical Jesus (*The Shadow of the Galilean*, SCM, 1987), which manages to be a “good read”, an introduction to Josephus, and an account of the place of Jesus within Palestinian Judaism. (Most regrettably the dismissive review of this book in the *Church Times* failed to come to terms with the book’s subtlety and consequently missed a major opportunity for educating the clergy.) Against such a background one approaches John P. Galvin’s translation of Theissen’s large-scale monograph on Paul, published in German in 1983, with considerable expectation. With this book Theissen announces his move into another “new” approach to the New Testament.

The author is fully aware of the scorn usually heaped on psychological interpretations of the New Testament, particularly within the German-speaking world: “Every exegete has learned that psychological exegesis is poor exegesis.” (1) This legacy of dialectical/kerygmatic theology’s rejection of supposedly “liberal” methods is dealt with in two ways. Firstly, Theissen limits his attention to the Pauline texts and their theology, and does not analyse Paul himself. By this astute move he avoids all

the problems associated with the attempt to reconstruct Paul's personality or life story from our fragmentary sources. Secondly, he sets out his theoretical position at length in the first part of the book. However, it is here that the major problem with the book is all too evident. While his earlier studies were careful to introduce potentially new pieces of theory in manageable sections, one is here confronted with 50 dense pages of very wide-ranging psychological and hermeneutical considerations. This part will only make sense to the expert; for the reader who is primarily interested in the New Testament it cries out for some illustration of the psychological theories discussed. However, the complexity of this section merely reflects its content: Theissen draws on three types of psychological explanation (learning theory, psychodynamic and cognitive approaches) and integrates them into a wider hermeneutical model, along the lines of Hans Thoma's synthetical approach to psychological theory.

Turning to Paul, the motif of the "secrets of the heart" (1 Cor. 4:1-5; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 14:20-25) is discussed to demonstrate the prima-facie case for a psychological approach to the Pauline texts. This is followed by detailed treatments of the themes of "the veil" (of Moses, 2 Cor. 3:4ff.; on the head of women, 1 Cor. 11:3ff.), law and sin in the classic passage in Rom. 7:7ff., glossolalia (1 Cor. 12 and 14, with further reference to Rom. 8:18-30), and wisdom for the perfect (1 Cor. 2:6-16). As can be seen from this list, Theissen has not attempted a comprehensive Pauline theology from a psychological perspective; on the other hand, he has tackled some of the most puzzling parts of Paul's epistles, and he wisely uses this self-limitation in order to discuss the textual, historical and psychological problems of his selected themes in great depth.

The interpretation itself is marked by an important methodological innovation. As already noted Theissen is not interested in naïve romanticizing about Paul's personality; nor does he simply interrogate the text. Each exegetical section contains a thorough analysis of the history of tradition of the theme under discussion, because historical traditions are the conditions for the possibilities of human experience and behaviour. These sections are extremely valuable pieces of historical research and many will find them more illuminating than the psychological analyses which follow them. They then act as a springboard for the psychological analyses of Paul's text within its historical context. In this way the historical and psychological approaches are integrated and the approach as a whole is akin to studies from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge.

The centre-piece of the book is the discussion of Rom. 7:7ff. Theissen argues in detail against Kümmel's widely-received view that this passage is not biographical; rather the text has at least a biographical background; in vv. 7-13 conflict with the law before Paul's conversion is depicted, in vv. 14-24 a postdecisional conflict is presented. In overview, Christ is a vicariously acting and suffering model; God condemns him but then revises his judgement. Believers constantly re-enact this event within themselves and thus learn to approach the demanding God without anxiety. In psychodynamic terms Christ is the catalyst of an inner

transformation, taking on one's negative identity, and thus allowing unconscious aggression against the demanding God to be brought to consciousness and be dealt with. In addition Paul's gospel offers a change in roles in which a realistic, yet unconditionally positive, self-image can be achieved. Theissen agrees with Kümmel that Paul's assessment of the past is retrospective: the pride in the law evident in Phil. 3 is the result of repressed unconscious conflict with the law; by contrast, Rom. 7 is the result of a long, retrospective, bringing-to-consciousness of this conflict. (242) It is regrettable that, despite Theissen's openness to a more positive evaluation of Judaism and the law than has been usual within German Lutheranism (e.g. 158), he does not debate with the new view of the law put forward in the late 70s by E. P. Sanders, H. Räisänen and others.

This book is undoubtedly a profound and substantial contribution to the understanding of Paul's thought and the task of interpreting New Testament texts. The exegetical and historical sections, which make up nearly two-thirds of the main text, are exemplary, and the psychological questioning brings out the complexities and contradictions of Paul's thought, often the casualties of interpretations based exclusively on historical or theological models. One can only wish that the psychological sections were more accessible to non-specialists. The English translation, a difficult and thankless task, is workmanlike but stilted, and in places the German is thinly disguised ("nonsalvation" for "Unheil", "foundation" for "Begründung" etc.). English translations of German works are noted in the bibliography, but the page numbers of German editions are given in the footnotes.

David Way

## **Arius: Heresy and Tradition**

Rowan Williams. DLT, London, 1987. Pp. 348. £19.95

This major new study of the famous arch-heretic introduces the complex political, theological and philosophical worlds of the fourth century to the reading public in a way which makes sense of the many competing forces which were at work then, and the different presuppositions which have governed modern studies of the subject. It will certainly be possible to question Professor Williams' judgement in some places, and there is no doubt that parts of this book will eventually be superseded by future scholarly research, but the solid achievement of these pages will remain and will constitute an essential point of reference for the ongoing debate about the origins of early Christian orthodoxy.

The first section of the book consists of a short introduction to the history of Arian studies. Great attention is paid to the theses of John Henry Newman and of Adolf Harnack, both of whom tried to relate Arius to the Antiochene tradition of theology associated with the name of Paul of Samosata. More recent studies, particularly that of Gregg and Groh, are also considered, though perhaps not at such a deep level. It is clear that Williams will be trying to overturn the classical scholarly

view of the subject and propose an essentially new interpretation of the career and theology of Arius.

The rest of the book is divided into three parts, with a concluding theological postscript and an appendix which gives the main credal documents of the period. The first part deals with the career of Arius, in so far as this is known, and concentrates on the events surrounding the Council of Nicaea. The picture drawn is of a church which was informally divided into two strands – the “Catholic”, with its emphasis on episcopal collegiality and communion, and the “Academic”, which consisted of schools of thought gathered round a favourite teacher. Williams contends that Arius represented the latter at a time when the former was gaining the upper hand, and that had he lived earlier, before the legalisation of the Church, he might have met a kinder fate.

Historical might-have-beens are obviously impossible to assess, and Part I is probably the weakest section of this book. This is not to deny that much of the author’s argument is valid in itself, but somehow he fails to get to grips with the question of why it was that so apparently obscure a person should have lent his name (at least) to a heresy which was to have strong political implications down to the end of the sixth century. Origen, or even Apollinarius or Nestorius could have served as a rallying point for political forces of different types, but Arius stands in a unique position in this respect. We may never know why, but the main contribution of this book is to provide a starting-point for the future research which will be needed in this sphere.

More satisfactory is the second part, which examines the theology of Arius in great detail. The author demonstrates that Arius was a committed theological conservative in the Alexandrian mould whose originality consisted of the fact that he reorganised traditional doctrines according to a new philosophical system which he got from the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry. He rejects the contention that Arius owed anything very much to the Antiochene school of thought, and places him firmly in the same mental universe as his great opponent Athanasius. The reasons for his ultimate eclipse are very judiciously summarised in the conclusion as follows (p. 178):

“He is not a theologian of consensus, but a notably individual intellect. Yet because his concerns are shared by a large number of bishops and teachers outside Egypt, he can, albeit briefly, be the figurehead for a consensus of sorts. For many of his contemporaries, Arius’ conception of orthodoxy at least ruled out what they wished to see ruled out; but relatively few would have endorsed, or perhaps even grasped, the theology of the *Thalia* in its full distinctiveness.”

This assertion is backed up by Part III, which deals with Arius’ philosophical background. Williams concludes that Arius was not a philosopher himself, but that he managed to borrow a radically different ontology from the one to which most of his contemporaries were

accustomed, and in so doing shook the foundations of their belief.

The overall conclusion of the book is that Arius saw the need for the Church to sort out its rather woolly systematic theology, but that his own attempt to do this failed to carry conviction. The pro-Nicene opposition however had to do what he intended, and succeeded in the end because it was able to find a more coherent set of links between the philosophical and the spiritual demands of Christian teaching. Arius thus appears as a pioneer who failed, rather than as an arch-heretic out to destroy the faith of the Church.

There can be no doubt that the historical portrait of Arius is exaggerated and unfair to him – the same, after all, can be said of every ancient heretic. In focussing our attention on the relevant details, Professor Williams has done an excellent job of reassessing Arius as a theologian. If he does not quite rehabilitate him, he at least shows that he should be taken much more seriously as a Christian thinker than traditional polemic has allowed.

If the book can be said to have a real weakness, it is that it concentrates so narrowly on Arius as an individual (in spite of the very wide ranging chapters on contemporary theological and philosophical thought) that it neglects the significance of Arianism. It may well be true that a conscious school of thought with that name did not exist, and that the term was an invention of the pro-Nicene party, but the designation could not have stuck if there were no element of truth in it. It may be possible to reduce the historical significance of Arius himself, or at least reinterpret it in such a way as to leave the traditional picture unrecognisable, but Arianism has a more public face which will not so easily be altered. However, that is another subject, and could profitably form the basis of a subsequent volume to examine it in its turn.

Gerald Bray

## Commentaries on Romans 1532-1542

T. H. L. Parker. T. & T. Clark, 1986. Pp. xii + 226. £14.95 (hb)

This book surveys all the commentaries which were written on the *Epistle to the Romans* between the years 1532-42. It may come as a surprise to learn that no fewer than 35 appeared in that turbulent decade, even if a few of them were only parts of a larger NT commentary. Still more surprising, if the commentaries were restricted to a specific commentary on *Romans* purely and simply, five of the commentaries were written by Romanists, and only one by a Reformer. What does this mean? What was urging these Catholic scholars to comment on *Romans*? Who was reading these commentaries? Why did these publishers find it worth their while to print so many within a span of 10 years?

Not that the author pursues these and other fascinating questions which emerge from his investigations. He confines himself strictly to a survey of the respective authors and their books, namely, Melancthon, Cajetan and Titelmann (1532); Bullinger

and Cagney (1533); Sadoletto (1535); Bucer, Maresche (1536); Pellican (1539); Calvin (1540); Grimani and Guillaud (1542). The question arises, can we even begin to imagine the theological taste of an age when its scholars produced such a spate of weighty commentaries on *Romans* within 10 years, and to realise that these authors enjoyed immense popularity?

In Part Two of the book the author confines himself to a comparative study of the manner in which these scholars interpreted the three early key passages of Rom. 1. 18-23, 2. 13-16 and 3. 20-28. Here the reader sees how the authors, with the same text before them, agree or disagree in their interpretations, whether of details such as the meaning of a word, or more broadly, their understanding of a passage. What strikes the reader is the remarkable diversity of the authors, (among whom were scholars, cardinals, professors, pastors, chaplains), all with a common concern for *Romans*, and further, how each maintains his own individuality. Secondly, how palpably clear the Epistle was to the Reformers, how difficult for the Romanists: the Reformers saw it as expressing the entire Gospel, and that their interpretation was faithful to earlier and purer times; the Romanists half assenting to this, yet arguing that only Mother Church had the authority to interpret it. The difference was not merely a matter of terminology, more a matter of authority. No single harmonious interpretation and no two clearly opposed harmonious interpretations emerge from this study. The Reformers, with their single-minded interpretation, argued that the Epistle was the genuine Gospel of God's Word, and that they alone were faithful to the earlier centuries and the true tradition. The Romanists argued, either by opposing the teaching of the Bible by the teaching of the Church, or by trying to show, (Cajetan, in particular), that Scripture was really on the side of the Church. It is worth noting how close both sides are in the central truths of justification by faith, even if the Catholics introduce certain modifications. What is still more important, both sides appeal to the final court of appeal of Holy Scripture, even if the Catholics maintain that it can only be properly expounded by the Church under the Pope; nevertheless, the ultimate authority remains the Word of God.

Apart from the intrinsic value of the study of these commentaries in this memorable decade, two truths emerge of special significance for the ecumenical debate. First, to recall how, in the period before Trent, that both sides were very close on the central truths of the Faith, viz., Law and Gospel, grace and mercy, faith and works, righteousness and justification. Even when Catholics bring in modifications to the stark evangelical thinking, it is still the truth of the Evangel they are arguing. Secondly, how close both sides are on the supremacy of Scripture. Even when the Catholics modify this supremacy by arguing that Scripture is to be interpreted within the Church under the Pope, nevertheless, it is still the same Scripture which both sides are discussing.

On this point may the reviewer say that he has spent years of his life reminding the Church that Luther (and following him, all the Reformers) both gave and could continue to restore the Christological corrective to the entire Church Catholic, Protestant and Catholic alike. Parker's book illustrates the vigour and vitality of biblical

and doctrinal argument before Trent engaged in by Romanists and Reformers alike. The reviewer begs humbly to observe that Parker's book is more than the simple (and valuable) analytical work of a Reformation scholar, for which we are grateful, but decisively carries encouragement and hope for the pursuance of ecumenical debate, hardly at the level of intensity of the decade 1532-42, nevertheless, at the depth such a significant debate demands. It is at such a level, and this level only, that the debate may eventually emerge into unity in truth.

James Atkinson

## **Images of Eternity. Concepts of God in five religious traditions**

Keith Ward. DLT, 1987. Pp. viii + 197. £8.95

Keith Ward sets himself an admirable, difficult and interesting task: to examine selected philosophers from the five major world religions and to discern whether there is a common underlying notion of the divine, or a common thematic concern which unites the religions. He employs what he calls "a phenomenological method"; not allowing his own beliefs to "intrude judgementally upon the traditions" considered (vii). His line up is formidable: Śankara, Rāmānuja, Buddhaghosa, Asvaghosa, Maimonides, Al-Ghazzālī, Aquinas – and a chapter on the Hebrew Bible.

In the 19th century search for the historical Jesus, apparently using neutral methods, the Jesus of history often ended up looking like the researcher. Ward's search and its outcome has certain parallels. His discovery that a "dual-aspect doctrine of God" is to be found within all five traditions is intriguing. This doctrine is bimodal. God is seen in one aspect, as wholly beyond change, unlimited pure being – while at the same time, in another aspect, involved in creation and temporality "ever realizing new values in time" (p. 155). Both aspects must be held together. On closer examination this dual aspect doctrine is remarkably similar to the doctrine of God in Ward's book, *Rational Theology and the Creativity of God*, Blackwell, 1984. (Ward acknowledges this in chapter eight.) One of course cannot rule out coincidence or/and a certain visionary insight, but such a conclusion should put us on our guard. Ward's argument stands or falls in his depiction and analysis of the representative thinkers.

Ward is scrupulously honest and diligently lucid in his exposition of the various thinkers. Fair, although not indisputable portrayals are given. The problems emerge when it comes to Ward's consequent construal of the implications of the philosophies of thinkers like Śankara and Buddhaghosa. After outlining Śankara's non-dual Advaita and highlighting the problem of the relation of Brahman to the finite world, Ward confesses that he finds Śankara "incoherent" (20)! He therefore tries to resolve the problem of Śankara frankly acknowledging: "I am certainly qualifying Śankara's terminology in a fairly radical way" and that his use of Śankara's terms are "very stretched" (26-7). Ward's resolution is to question the ultimate identity of Ātman and Brahman; and suggests a "unity" instead, emphasising identity, yet difference.

This allows him to hold together equally, rather than ultimately relegate saguna Brahman (with attributes) to nirguna Brahman (without attributes) – as does Śankara. Śankara's thought is admittedly criticised in a similar vein by other Vedāntins. But to resolve Śankara's problems in a fashion hardly befitting an apparently neutral phenomenological method and then to argue that this resolution gives us in Śankara a dual aspect doctrine of God is deeply problematic.

With Buddhagosa, Ward is equally agile in construing an-atta (the doctrine of no-self) as an injunction to act selflessly, rather than allowing its full metaphysical import. The latter he calls a paradox and says he “can see no way of resolving it” (p.62). Similarly, Buddhagosa's view of nirvāna is rendered into a theism, but with a “minimalist view of the creative action of God” (p. 64)! This is hardly a straightforward phenomenological presentation but a very creative interpretation of quite *different* views so that they can be construed to point towards a similar underlying concept of God. (Ward is not unaware of the theistic implications of the term God.)

Ward also argues that there is a similarity of structure within the major religions: a vision/revelation of something beyond the finite; a response and a way of life that follows from this response; and a consequent transformation in those who undertake such a response. While Ward acknowledges a difference between structure and content (p. 48), there is a tendency to conflate the two, so as to allow the former to interpret the latter. Hence, while acknowledging that “Vedantins speak of the goal of life as union with the Self, whereas Jews speak of an obedient love of God” he argues for a significant “similarity of structure; of a turning from selfish pursuits to an obedient union with a higher personal being” (p. 46). This may well be – but at what level of significance?

In highlighting these difficulties in Ward's argument, I do not wish to register a complaint at its basic intentions, but rather at the methods employed. At a high level of generality Ward's thesis is partially convincing, but whether Śankara or Buddhagosa would have accepted it is another question. Ward's contribution to the debate about the relation between religions is provocative, thoughtful and original. It will be of immense interest to see how philosophers from the various traditions respond to his suggestions.

Gavin D'Costa

### **The Way of the Black Messiah. The Hermeneutical Challenge of Black Theology as a Theology of Liberation**

Theo Witzvliet. SCM, 1987. Pp. xiv + 332. £12.50

Witzvliet sees black theology as a liberation theology and he defines it thus: “Liberation theology is a criticism of any theology which in its method strives to be universally applicable and in so doing ‘forgets’ that any reflection is always already part of a particular historical context” (p. xi). “Black theology criticizes the theological traditions (of the West) because of their benign neglect (C. Eric Lincoln) of black history and

experience” (p. xiii). It “criticizes the norms of the established schools” (William R. Jones) (p. 5). American history and American theology can thus no longer claim bona fide scholarship when it constantly overlooks black culture, religion and achievements. It is revealing, says James Cone, “to note that during my nearly six years of residence at Garrett-Northwestern, not one text written by a black person was ever used as a required reading for a class” (p. 312).

These are severe criticisms of our theological traditions not just in America but also in Europe and in a great part of Third World theological establishments. Are they justified? All depends on what we understand by theology. If by theology we understand a theoretical discipline which operates in a lofty stratosphere, unspoiled both by the theologian's own social and biographical background and by the social context in which he operates, then of course we can benignly ignore the criticism of black theologians. But who would dare to put forward such a gnostic understanding of theology! Both, evangelical (e.g. Charles Kraft) and catholic theologians (e.g. Walter Bülhmann) have said farewell to such a theology. And in fact we could have learned this already from the historical critical school of biblical interpretation which taught us that all biblical texts have their social, political and cultural *Sitz im Leben*.

But what about Karl Barth, one might interject. Didn't he teach us that the word of God is unspoiled by its context? Well, he didn't! Barth's theology has a clear *Sitz im Leben*, not only in his fight against fascism but also in his stance in Switzerland. Think of his statement that the moral test of a nation is the way it treats its prisoners. For many years he preached in the prison of Basel, and only in the prison. He made it a custom when visiting another country to ask for permission to visit the prisons in order to assess that country's civilisation. “Black theology describes white theology as the theology which passes over the victims of oppression. In this sense Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth are not white theologians” (p. 6). And when Barth is thoughtlessly quoted without taking into account his development and the front against which he addressed his theology, then “what in one context is liberating theological insight can become the opposite in another” (p. 7). “It is not illegitimate to suppose that in Cone's black theology perhaps for the first time in American theology Karl Barth is really accepted and incorporated” (Klauspeter Blaser). Cone was angry with the Barthians who used him “to justify doing nothing about the struggle for justice”. Cone always thought that Barth was closer to him than to them (p. 166).

Whether black theology is a true incorporation of Barth or not will probably remain controversial. I believe that Cone has the evidence on his side. In the case of Bonhoeffer the situation is even clearer. Forty years before any black theology appeared, he wrote in his reports from America about the deep insights he got from the black Christians and that – in his opinion – if one wanted to hear the Gospel one had to listen to their songs, their prayers, their preaching and not to the mainline American churches.

But what about the weaknesses of black theology? Witvliet acknowledges them on the basis of admissions made by black theologians themselves. For instance, black missionaries in Africa have been just as paternalistic as white missionaries (p. 236). There is an increasing gulf between the black middle classes and the hopeless situation of the black underclass (p. xiii). "We are no longer preaching on Sunday mornings to a group of poor, oppressed Black people who may not have had a decent meal on Saturday" (p. 245). Therefore black theology has also a critical function in relation to black religion (p. 216).

And what about the relation of black American theology to African theology? Here I must disagree with Witvliet who sees in African forms of theology a nostalgia for the intact culture of the past (p. 43). It is exactly in these African forms of theology that we might find the clue to some of the questions which Witvliet asks but cannot answer, e.g.: "Is it possible within the framework of what is called 'theology' to do justice to the unique character of black religion?" (p. 214). "How can a discipline like systematic theology or dogmatics in which the written word is uppermost, give expression to the specifically oral tradition of black culture and religion?" (p. 217). The Africans have shown us how. They also have protested against the rigidity of Latin American liberation theology which is sometimes more interested in producing Marxist theory than in listening to their own women's groups (p. 238).

How such an African theology would look is not the concern of this review. But there are alternatives. Witvliet believes that they lie in a pneumatology following a little-known but important Dutch tradition which does not restrict the Spirit of God to the Christian church. And here I can only agree with Witvliet.

In the end, however, we have to ask ourselves what all this means for our own country, the UK. Where and how will the many black Christians in our mainline churches, and in several hundred black-led churches, develop a black theology which helps us to recognise the cultural imprisonment of our Western theology and helps them to become part of an ecumenical theology which will never be uniform but which will listen to other voices. I wonder which theological college, which university, will first take up the challenge. It is high time.

In addition to these fundamental issues, Witvliet gives us a good insight into the history of black theology in America, he discusses Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the Spirituals and black preaching, and the different strands of black theology in America. This is a good thought-provoking book written in the best Dutch tradition of scholarship and ecumenical openness.

Walter J. Hollenweger

## Theology in Turmoil. The Roots, Course and Significance of the Conservative-Liberal Debate in Modern Theology

Alan P. F. Sell. Baker, 1986. Pp. 199. \$9.95

Histories of modern theology conform for the most part to the conception of history as an account of the doings and influence of the great, and it is indeed true that the tone of much contemporary theology is set by those we have come to consider great. One of the debts which we owe to Professor Sell in this and earlier writings is his demonstration that all kinds of other influences have been at work. His is a view that more goes on than is to be witnessed in establishments, whether academic or ecclesiastical, and that if we are to gain a full picture of our background we must be aware of what is going on in all kinds of places. A strength of this book is that it takes into its compass many strands of theological thought, particularly dissenting and American, which are often absent from the standard histories.

In the course of a fairly short book – too short to do justice to all three of the features announced in the subtitle – the author presents a panoramic view of a debate between "conservative" and "liberal" which is with us still. He begins with a chapter on the "immanentism" which was introduced by the three great influences of recent times, Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel, and then moves on to accounts of the effect of biblical criticism and evolutionary science. Both of the latter, he observes, tend to take their impulse from and further contribute to the immanentism of the age. But he also observes that the matter was by no means straightforward: for many thoughtful theologians in the 19th century, evolution theory lacked the terrors which we tend to assume it had for all.

There are other interesting ways in which, by looking at the broad picture, Dr. Sell is able to undermine fashionable theories. For example, we tend to believe that until the First World War evolutionary optimism was all-conquering, while with the crisis it suddenly disappeared. This book shows that many had not succumbed to optimism before the war, while others continued to be optimistic after it. Similarly, although he shows that there were clear theological differences between conservative and liberal, he is also careful to point out the vast range of variations and overlaps to be found, and, indeed, the ambiguities inherent in the terms themselves.

The debate, as the author rightly comments, is about where the heart of the Christian gospel is to be found. Yet, despite an avowed intent to suggest that modern immanentism vitiates the gospel, he is even-handed in criticism, and the final chapter shows the weaknesses on both sides of the debate. In fact, the historical strength of the book is that, coming from a "conservative" author, it is yet fully aware of the rigidities of many conservative positions, most of them still very much with us, which made liberalism inevitable. Nevertheless, the theological aim is never far away, and by the use of the word *immanentism* the author indicates where the heart of the matter lies, for he believes that the whole tendency of modern thought is to blur the fundamental distinction

between the Creator and the creation, and so to become idealistic rather than religious, anthropocentric rather than theocentric. The footmarks of the great Forsyth are everywhere to be seen in the argument, and it is to be hoped that we shall later receive from this author some more systematic account of the central theological categories that inform his subtle and detailed historical criticism.

Colin Gunton

### **Tradition and Authority in Science and Theology, with Reference to the Thought of Michael Polanyi**

Alexander Thomson. Scottish Academic Press, 1987. Pp. xi + 116. £10.50

### **Knowledge of God. Calvin, Einstein and Polanyi**

Iain Paul. Scottish Academic Press, 1987. Pp. x + 155. £10.50

The realisation that the development and assumptions of modern science are not in every way hostile to Christian belief is spawning an ever growing literature. One of the sources of enlightenment is the work of the scientist and philosopher, Michael Polanyi. Although there is a danger, not always avoided in these books, that Polanyi will be overused or used uncritically, there is no doubt that he has much to give to theology, particularly to those who would explore the relationship between Christianity and modernity. Both of the authors whose work is under review here are Church of Scotland ministers with qualifications in science, and both argue in different ways that attention to Polanyi and others offers a third way between conservative authoritarianism and modernist liberalism.

Alexander Thomson's book is the more directly Polanyian, and develops with the philosopher's help a conception of authority and tradition in the church which can be seen to operate in a similar way to that in the sciences. It is also very much a work in the Reformed tradition, and its two other presiding spirits are Karl Barth and the major British theologian of the second half of our century, T. F. Torrance.

The book begins with a demonstration with the help of Polanyi that the popular view of the scientist – as enshrined in the thought of Bertrand Russell, for example – as a totally free and autonomous individual is completely false. Science is a communal (“convivial”, to use Polanyi's expression) activity, requiring both the acceptance of traditional authority – in particular the work of established figures in science – and the necessity of shared standards if there is to be any meaningful dialogue and advance. Authority, of course, does not here mean unquestioned authority, but a common acceptance of where one must begin if one is to do real science. The scientific community operates as a “competent but not

supreme authority”. Advance can only come by living in a tradition of thought and activity.

After a long chapter on Polanyi, occupying about one-third of the book, come a series of shorter chapters on the authority of the Bible and in the church, on differences between Roman Catholic and Reformed concepts of tradition and authority, and finally on the development of tradition. The movement is towards a theology of authority and tradition that is open, dynamic and non-authoritarian. Thus the author rightly refuses to accept the choice that conservative Catholic critics of Reformed theology hold to be necessary, between an all-competent magisterium and subjective individual judgement. Using a Polanyian distinction, Dr. Thomson asserts that, “The interpretation of Holy Scripture that Luther or Calvin taught is not subjective . . . It is personal” (p. 95).

The title of the second book is a little misleading, for the main argument is for the modernness and importance of the theology of John Calvin. Einstein and Polanyi appear largely as foils, parallels and sources for the development of an approach to the Bible and theology. Dr. Paul's chief concern is to develop the distinction between Calvin's knowledge of the heart – what he calls cordial knowledge – and mere intellectual knowledge. Here there is a real parallel with Polanyi, whose conception of personal knowledge, which serves as a corrective to ideas of knowledge as merely and objectively intellectual, provides the author with an opportunity for a development, perhaps over-development, of Calvin's notion. And yet there is clearly something there to be developed. Recent studies of Jonathan Edwards, for example, have shown that Edwards took from Calvin the germ of a distinctive aesthetic, surely the same kind of enterprise that is being attempted here.

The main thesis of the book is that intellectual knowledge can be itself only within a framework of personal knowledge – of the knowledge of the heart. That is not to deny the objectivity of truth, but to attend to the way in which knowledge is obtained, in whatever mode. It is here that Einstein is called in support. Relativity theory is not, as the author rightly affirms, epistemologically relativistic; on the contrary, it is about the invariance of cosmic laws. Similarly, it is rather speculatively argued, Scripture refers to the invariance of the ways of the God to whom Scripture witnesses.

It is in the light of the personal knowledge of God given through Scripture that Dr. Paul attacks intellectualist approaches to the Scriptures, literalist and what he calls liberalist alike. Merely intellectualizing approaches to the Bible miss its prime function, which is to bring to God. On the way to his conclusion, he has to engage – and does so on the whole without special pleading – with the question of whether Calvin himself was a literalist, as he is widely believed to have been. After an examination of the evidence, in what is in some ways the most interesting and convincing part of the book, the author concludes that the principles of Calvin's theology do nothing for modern literalisms like creationism.



There are, then, good things to be found in both of these books, though they are marred by too determined attempts to establish the relevance to and compatibility with theology of the various scientific authorities. But they are none the less to be welcomed as two more contributions to the campaign to heal the immense wounds, many of them self-inflicted, which the church has suffered as a result of the ways of modern science.

Colin Gunton

### **Transcendence and Providence: Reflections of a Physicist and Priest**

William G. Pollard. *Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge*, Number 6. Scottish Academic Press, 1987. Pp. xi + 269. £12.50 (hb)

William Pollard's contribution to this important series consists of a collection of papers the bulk of which are at least 20 years old. Apart from an introductory chapter which is essentially autobiographical, the book has been arranged into four main sections. These deal in turn with the recovery of our Judaeo-Christian heritage in the context of a culture dominated by science; certain similarities between science and religion; dogmatic belief in the inevitability of human evolution; and, dogmatic rejection of transcendence.

The main theme of the first section is Pollard's conviction that post-Enlightenment thought (which, in his view, is closely related with our Hellenistic heritage and the scientific world-view) has rendered western culture incapable of responding positively to its Judaeo-Christian heritage. He traces the history of this development by drawing some rather crude comparisons between the rise of Christianity and that of science (e.g. he speaks of the foundation of the Royal Society as a second pentecost!). He argues that Christianity and science are, in reality, complementary and that a renaissance can be achieved in our century only by way of an adequate synthesis of these two cultures.

He claims to pursue the complementarity of science and religion further in the second section. However, the first paper is essentially an attack on the triumphalism of the scientific community. The second paper returns to the theme, presenting science as a community of knowledge and drawing parallels between that and the Christian community.

Section three is a "refutation" of belief in the inevitability of human evolution. It consists of papers on the wonder of life; the improbability of earth-like planets; and Monod's work "Chance and Necessity". The most significant part of this section is his assertion that the statistical form of modern physics precludes explanations couched solely in terms of natural causation. In other words, science has given up any pretension to completeness in its explanations of natural phenomena.

His concluding section (and the longest part of the book) is devoted to showing that a scientific culture cannot neglect transcendent (or supernatural) reality. Recurring themes in these papers include the notion of

the natural order as embedded in transcendent reality (drawing on a metaphor from geometry), and the suggestion that Rudolf Otto's analysis of religious experience offers an adequate way of evading the limits placed upon knowledge by Kant. Thus he admits the impossibility of forming concepts of transcendent reality while insisting that one may speak of transcendence (experiences of this aspect of reality are non-conceptual and are spoken of by means of symbols and metaphors designed to evoke the same experience in others). His concluding chapter is an attempt to discern signs of transcendence in modern physics itself.

The overall impression was of a brave attempt to harmonise an orthodox view of contemporary physics with an equally orthodox view of Christian theology. However, this book has added little of substance to the present body of literature on the dialogue between science and religion. Most of what is said here can be found in more carefully nuanced form elsewhere. I do not mean to denigrate Pollard's contribution to the dialogue. On the contrary, when these papers were originally published many of the ideas they contain were quite novel. For me, this was the chief value of the collection: a retrospect of the career and concerns of a pioneer of the dialogue rather than a contribution to the present debate.

Lawrence Osborn

### **The Liturgy of St. John**

Gordon S. Wakefield. Epworth Press, 1985. Pp. ix + 95. £3.95

This book is a devotional work which uses critical scholarship rather than ignoring it. The author, a Methodist minister and Principal of the ecumenical Queen's College, Birmingham, attempts to bridge the gap between scholarship and the pulpit.

The subject matter is John 13-21, which the author divides into six sections, to each of which he devotes a chapter: The Preparation (13:1-17), The Fencing of the Table (13:18-38), The Ministry of the Word (14-16), The Prayer of "Consecration" (17), Crucifixion-Resurrection-Communion (18-20), and Post-Communion (21). Wakefield acknowledges that the book may be criticized because it is neither "pure" scholarship, nor "pure" devotion. He is trying to bridge the gap, which is no small task. In addition to providing a peg on which the interpretation of the final chapters of John may be hung, the author hopes that the book may shed some light on John's somewhat oblique eucharistic theology.

Whether a book impresses one as a tight, developing argument, or rather as a collection of somewhat disparate elements is very much influenced by the dispositions of the reader. (It is my experience that while a majority of fresh readers of Mark's Gospel see it as a collection of snapshots, a minority see in it a clearly developing argument.) I was more impressed by the very considerable number of rich insights in Wakefield's book than by its presentation of John 13-21 as a liturgy. Other readers will judge differently, and with no less validity.

The author rightly criticizes the age-long harmonization of the Gospels in liturgy and devotion, which conceals the piercing light which comes from each in turn in a pious haze (p. ix). The Lord's injunction after the Washing of the Feet is for mutuality, and hence any imitation of the action by priest, pope, or sovereign is to misunderstand its nature (p. 20). Wakefield is critical of the "open invitation" to communion, which he describes as a piece of 20th-century slackness. The church must not be so welcoming to sinners that it condones sin, or blurs the distinction between light and darkness, and itself betrays truth (p. 27). He insists that love should not be confused with a superficial politeness (p. 31). Chapter 4 on the Prayer of "Consecration" is particularly well done.

Chapter 5 on the Crucifixion-Resurrection-Communion draws attention to some of the more striking features of the Johannine Passion narrative. His discussion of the place of Mary Magdalene is very thought-provoking. He makes a great deal of the change required in the relationship of Mary and Jesus. Mary's clinging to Jesus will prevent him going to the Father. Otherwise the relationship might become "obsessive, infatuated and idolatrous": "The harsh truth is that to make human relations the supreme end of life is idolatrous" (p. 84). There follow some striking comments on the radical limitation of all human relationships, and on the encounter with the ascended Christ through preaching (and discussion and debate).

In dealing with the appearance to the ten, Wakefield suggests that there should be two rites of peace at the eucharist, one of reconciliation (cf. Matt. 5:23), and the other when we have entered into Christ's sacrifice. He draws from John some important ecclesiological conclusions about the supremacy of discipleship over ministerial position, and the great Christian privilege of all disciples of offering the divine forgiveness. It is not clear to this reader, however, how such a conclusion derives from the text of John.

One might justifiably expect that a work which derives from modern exegesis would deal with the stages of composition of the gospel, and pay much attention to the community in which and for which the author may be supposed to have written. These are two of the most obvious preoccupations of modern Johannine scholars. But in this work these questions are not dealt with at any length. The Gospel is examined only in its finished text, and only occasionally does the author attempt to situate a passage in a particular historical context. Wakefield appears to wish to root these chapters of John in the context of Christian living today, and he does so with considerable success, albeit without first having rooted the Gospel in its original context.

Concentration on details sometimes distracts the reader from the overall argument. The movement from exegesis to comment on modern practices within the churches is not always smooth, and applications to the present-day make some bold leaps in hermeneutics. If the case for regarding the final chapters of John as a liturgy is not overwhelmingly convincing, there is scarcely a page on which there is not a very perceptive comment. A reader of Wakefield's book would find it difficult to read

John's final chapters again without at least being aware of liturgical elements in them.

Michael Prior, CM

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

David Ford lectures in Systematic Theology at the University of Birmingham. His most recent book was a study, jointly with Professor Frances M. Young, of the Second Letter to the Corinthians.

Michael Walker teaches theology at South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff. His article contains some of the research for which he was recently awarded the degree of Ph.D. of the University of London.

Keith Ward is Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion at King's College, London, and the author of many books, including a number on the concept of God.

Nicholas Watson is engaged in postdoctoral study of medieval women mystics at the Memorial University of St. John's, Newfoundland.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

Richard Bauckham *Moltmann. Messianic Theology in the Making*. Marshall Pickering. Pp. x + 175. £9.95

Paul A. B. Clarke and Andrew Linzey *Research on Embryos. Politics, Theology and Law*. Lester Crook Academic Publishing. Pp. 104. £5.95

Keith W. Clements *Lovers of Discord. Twentieth Century Theological Controversies in England*. SPCK. Pp. x + 261. £8.95

Klaus Deppermann *Melchior Hoffman. Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation*. T. & T. Clark. Pp. 432. £29.95 hb

Marc H. Ellis *Towards a Jewish Theology of Liberation*. SCM Press. Pp. xii + 147. £6.95

Austin Farrer *Faith and Speculation. An Essay in Philosophical Theology*. T. & T. Clark. Pp. vii + 175. n/p

Everett Ferguson *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Eerdmans/Paternoster. Pp. xvii + 515. £20.45

Robin Gill *Beyond Decline. A Challenge to the Churches*. SCM Press. Pp. 146. £5.95

Fr Lev Gillet *Encounter at the Well*. Mowbray. Pp. 138. £5.95

John de Gruchy *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis. A South African Perspective*. Collins Flame. Pp. 183. £7.95

John de Gruchy *Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Witness to Jesus Christ*. Collins. Pp. x + 308. £7.95

Richard Harries *Christ is Risen*. Mowbray. Pp. ix + 131. £2.50

Eric James (ed.) *God's Truth. Essays to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Honest to God*. SCM Press. Pp. xii + 227. £9.50

Grace Jantzen *Julian of Norwich*. SPCK. Pp. x + 230. £8.95

Alistair Kee *The Roots of Christian Freedom. The Theology of John A. T. Robinson*. SPCK. Pp. xvi + 190. £8.95

Hans Küng *The Incarnation of God. An Introduction to Hegel's Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology*. T. & T. Clark. Pp. xv + 601. £24.95

Ann Loades *Searching for Lost Coins. Explorations in Christianity and Feminism*. SPCK. Pp. x + 118. £4.95

Rudolph Nelson *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind. The Case of Edward Carnell*. CUP. Pp. xiii + 252. £27.50 hb

Jacob Neusner *Christian Faith and the Bible of Judaism. The Judaic Encounter with Scripture*. Eerdmans/Paternoster. Pp. xviii + 205. £10.60

Aidan Nichols OP *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger. An Introductory Study*. T. & T. Clark. Pp. vii + 338. £9.95

Iain Paul *Knowledge of God. Calvin, Einstein and Polanyi*. Scottish Academic Press. Pp. x + 155. £10.50

Petr Porkorny *The Genesis of Christology. Foundations for a Theology of the New Testament*. T. & T. Clark. Pp. xvi + 266. £14.95 hb

Ulrich Simon *From Holocaust to Atonement*. James Clark and Co. Pp. 138. £5.95

Choan-Seng Song *Theology from the Womb of Asia*. SCM Press. Pp. xiv + 241. £8.95

William H. Stephens *The New Testament World in Pictures*. Lutterworth Press. Pp. 420. £14.95

Stephen W. Sykes (ed.) *Authority in the Anglican Communion. Essays Presented to Bishop John Howe*. The Anglican Book Centre. Pp. 286. \$18.95

Gerd Theissen *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*. T. & T. Clark. Pp. x + 433. £19.95 hb

Peter Walker *The Anglican Church Today. Rediscovering the Middle Way*. Mowbray. Pp. 164. £6.95