

Book Reviews

The Open Church: by Jurgen Moltmann. SCM Press, London, 1978. Pp. 128. Price £ 3.50.

"What cannot be said simply," says Moltmann in the Preface to the book, "does not need to be written at all. Simplicity is the highest challenge to Christian theology" (p. 9). Much of our theological literature does not obviously meet the exacting demand of simplicity. *The Open Church* does.

It does because in it the author speaks to members of the congregation, not as a professional theologian, but as a member of the congregation. "Christian theology," Moltmann believes, "stands or falls with the church," and the church, he is convinced, "stands or falls with the gathered congregation" (p. 9).

The formation of the Christian congregation is the central theme of the book. In a sense Moltmann is drawing out here the practical, congregational implications of the themes he had dealt with in his earlier books — *The Theology of Hope*, *The Crucified God*, and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Those titles witness to a movement of exploration, beginning with the hope that is Easter, through the suffering of Good Friday, to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. It is the same movement that leads him to the vision of the open church.

In his essay *Theology and Joy* Moltmann wrote: "When we cease using God as *helper in need*, *stop-gap* and *problem-solver*, we are ... finally free for the ... joy of God and the enjoyment of each other in God. Purpose-free rejoicing in God may then take the place of the uses and abuses of God" (p. 80). In *The Open Church* that vision is bodied forth in detail — the vision of the local congregation as the liberated people of a liberated God, and its life as a celebration of that liberation with zest and in community. It describes the congregation come of age.

The titles of the chapters provide a rough outline of the book's argument.

As people — and as congregations — we must recover *the passion for life*. Passion is a crucial word for Moltmann. It includes the pain of God and the passion of our Lord; it also involves the joyous affirmation of life and the world. "If we take our bearings from the passion of God and the passion history of Christ we are led out of death-before-life and into life-before-death, and our world is preserved against collapse and apathy" (p. 26).

We must live in *community with others*. Where we do not accept, we do not only expel but we also exterminate. The "open congregation of acceptance" is a kind of living together which affirms:

- that no one is alone with his or her problems,
- that no one has to conceal his or her disabilities,
- that there are not some who have the say and others who have nothing to say,
- that neither the old nor the little ones are isolated,
- that one bears the other even when it is unpleasant and there is no agreement, and
- that, finally, the one can also at times leave the other in peace when the other needs it (p. 33).

This indeed is the *messianic lifestyle*, rooted in “the call into the freedom of the messianic time” (p. 33). As such it is “evangelistic” rather than legalistic. It does not isolate us from people, but involves us in the life of the whole community. It is radically different from the world-denying piety of the conservative Christian and the total secularity of the self-righteous activist—from the kind of polarisation, all too common in our day, which puts asunder what God has joined together in Christ Jesus.

It is a lifestyle characterised by *openfriendship*. We are not merely the servants of God; we are not only the children of God: we are God’s friends. The congregation is called to be a “fellowship of the friends of Jesus.”

Within such fellowship of openness and acceptance worship will become *the feast of freedom*. The staid and structured services of worship will then give way to “the laughter of the redeemed, the dance of the liberated, and the creative play of fantasy” (p. 74). There can be no reform of worship till we have a re-formation of the congregation.

Even as the life of such a congregation derives from the power of Christ’s passion, it becomes the sign of the ecumenical Church under the cross. For, basically, “it is not unity which brings salvation, but salvation which brings unity” (p. 84).

Such a congregation will have *hope in the struggle of the people*—because of its understanding of Jesus as the one in whom people discover their own identity. That identity no ruler can take away from them. Nor can the people pass it on to the safe keeping of the self-styled liberators of people. A congregation that is part of the community of Jesus will participate in the history of the people, and rejoice with them and suffer with them.

Such, then, is the *congregation ‘from below’*. “In the hierarchical church with its splendid buildings and its wise authorities religious power was and is experienced as a reflection of the fatherly sovereignty of God in heaven. But God as love can be experienced and represented only in the comprehensible congregation in which one sees and recognises the other, and accepts the other as he or she is accepted in Christ” (p. 115).

Moltmann argues that such a congregation will be the fulfilment of the Reformation, for the three emphases of the Reformation were on the justifying faith, the universal priesthood of all believers, and the mature, responsible congregation. "We should therefore strengthen free associations at the base of the churches," he concludes, "so that they may become the living cells of tomorrow's congregation" (p. 125).

The word "base" will remind us in our part of the world of the current discussion of basic Christian communities — a discussion sadly limited to the Roman Catholic Church. The question is often raised, in the Asian situation, as to whether we should not set before us the goal, rather, of basic human communities. Addressing as he does a western, apathetic, Christian readership, Moltmann is not obliged to raise that question here with the sharpness it calls for in our predicament. He seems to assume, and address himself to, a readership of relaxed Christians — a sort of Christendom in quiescence. That, surely, is not our milieu in Asia. For us it is important to know how "open" open can be, because even to be a "Christian" congregation, in our manifestly pluralist context, is to appear closed, *ipso facto*.

That the congregation "can and must become passionate, evangelical, diakonal, missional, ecumenical, charismatic, and esthetic" (p. 18) few people will dispute. But how it may become all this is not clear. Nor is it clear how the opening up of the Christian Church will cope with the closing of the ranks, evident particularly in Asia today, in other faiths and ideologies.

But then the book, as the sub-title describes it, is an "invitation to a messianic lifestyle." It does not pretend to be a blueprint, much less a prescription with details of dosage for people in the North and the South.

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Truth is Two-Eyed: by John A. T. Robinson. SCM Press, London, 1979. Pp. xi+161. Price £ 4.95.

A common polarity characterizes all individuals as well as all traditions and cultures. Both individuals and cultures have two eyes, two different centres of vision from which reality reveals itself under a different light. But these two visions of reality are never in perfect balance for "we all of us have a stronger eye, which will control how we see things" (p. 39). Thus the polarity between the eastern and western visions results from the fact that their "stronger eye," operating in isolation, has concentrated on a partial aspect of reality without fully realizing its partiality.

The author of *Honest to God* tells us how, on the occasion of an invitation to deliver the Teape Lectures in India, he, a Christian of

the West, being forced "to look afresh through Eastern eyes," came to the conclusion that Truth is two-eyed.

In order to understand his approach it is necessary to distinguish it from other possible attitudes in face of the dichotomy. Obviously he rejects that kind of exclusivism which dismisses the "other" as irrelevant or tries to refute him through debate and controversy. Neither does he advocate an easy syncretism which, in its woolly universalism, pretends that the differences are superficial and can easily be ignored. Further he does not aim at a kind of Hegelian synthesis in which the two visions would eventually be resorbed.

He stands for *dialogue* understood in its authentic sincerity: "The purpose of dialogue is not to eliminate but to respect the differences of centre — for both are essential. Rather it is to articulate and bring them to fuller awareness. In the process, of course, we may find our centres being questioned and their adequacy being challenged, chipped away or changed out of recognition. We may even be led to abandon them and begin looking at things from another viewpoint. Indeed unless we are prepared for this we should not start: authentic dialogue is dangerous. But in the first instance it is a process of opening up closed frontiers, of letting down defences against access or egress. This can appear to be a threatening experience, yet if we have the courage to be exposed it constantly proves a strengthening and enriching one" (pp. 4-5).

The author envisages three levels on which authentic dialogue can operate: as a corrective to a distorted vision caused by a one-sided emphasis; as a challenge "explicitly to any kind of exclusivism and implicitly to a claim to uniqueness"; as an enrichment of a parochial faith.

First level: Dialogue as a corrective (chapters I-IV). The author brings out the contrast between several aspects of the two visions, insisting that these aspects do not define any particular faith as such, but are rather prominent features which "can so dominate a tradition that a distorted perspective arises if the corrective is not present" (p. ix). The four main contrasts inviting dialogue are the "Thou" and the "That," God and the Personal; the Christ and the Historical; Man and the Material. I find it impossible to summarize the subtle and at times intricate journey through which the author takes us. It makes fascinating reading and leaves us exactly where he wants us to reach: an attitude of openness before the mystery of God and the universe. One almost feels that both Job and Arjuna recognize their deep affinity before two different displays of God's theophany.

Second level: Dialogue as a challenge (chapter V). This, to my mind, is the most stimulating chapter of the book.

On the one hand, we have the one-eyed inclusiveness of syncretism: "the hospitality of Hinduism to all (or most) religious insights *on its own terms*, which means plucking them from their roots in the historical particular" (p. 103); on the other hand, the one-eyed exclusiveness of those who, while insisting on the historical particular, claim to couple it with the "once for all," thus divesting Christ of his genuine humanity and, in the words of Norman Pittenger (quoted on p. 101), "making of

the Incarnation a docetic exception to human conditions, circumstances and situations."

The relation Father-Son which is the central revelation of the New Testament read with the eye of exclusivism naturally raises the question of the pre-existence of the Christ as a person. Already in post-exilic Judaism the tendency can be discerned to personify certain attributes or activities of God, such as Spirit, Wisdom and Word. In the light of theological speculation centred on the dogma of the hypostatic union, "the personified pre-existence becomes personal pre-existence." The pre-existing Person of the Word "assumes" a human nature and the result is an impersonal humanity whose thoughts, actions and volitions belong to a non-human person. Of such a being how can we say that he is "a man like us in all things but sin"? His uniqueness is his anomaly.

The desire to restore Christ's reality as a human person does not in any way deny the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Yet it certainly questions the adequacy of the Greek concepts of nature and person. It is at the same time an invitation to Indian theologians to rethink the mystery in Indian terms and to offer a corrective and a complement to the western vision. Exclusiveness is to be replaced by openness: to say that "ultimate reality is Christ-like, as given definition in the person, cross and resurrection of Jesus, is not to confine the truth of God to this"; we must "dare the conviction, always to be clarified, completed and corrected in dialogue, that it is this which offers the profoundest clue to all the rest" (p. 129).

Third level: Dialogue as enrichment (chapter VI). In this last chapter the author briefly analyses the prospects of Indian theology and ends with this quotation from P. Chenchiach: "The negative plate of Jesus, developed in a solution of Hinduism, brings out hitherto unknown features of the portrait and these may prove exactly the 'Gospel' for our time."

Although relying largely on secondary sources, the author displays a remarkable insight into the eastern vision. One might perhaps regret the indiscriminate use of the term "pantheism," especially when it seems to include Shankara's non-dualism.

Throughout the book the "weaker" eye of the two great traditions is not ignored. This might suggest that the best preparation for the dialogue between Hindus and Christians would be a deeper awareness within each tradition of a half-articulate affinity with the other.

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Summer in the Seed: by Aelred Squire. SPCK, London, 1980.
Pp. xv+240. Price £ 3.95.

Readers of Aelred Squire's earlier book *Asking the Fathers* will turn with eager anticipation to *Summer in the Seed* and they will not be disappointed. This second book is not a sequel in the usual mean-

ing of that term, rather has it been written as a kind of setting for its predecessor. That was a treatise on meditation and prayer written to help those who felt a restless urge to change or be changed in character and life. *Summer in the Seed* is concerned with hidden riches of a related kind and as befits an accomplished Patristic scholar, Aelred Squire again seeks to recall his readers to some of the forgotten convictions of undivided Christianity. A prophetic note sounds throughout the book containing words of warning and appeal. The author deplores the current fashions of determinism and fatalism presently endemic in western society and calls for humanity as a whole to recover a sense of personal responsibility both to choose aright and to accept the consequences of such right choice. In this book the reader is not presented with ready answers to the problems postulated in the text, rather is he left to pick up and nourish the seeds scattered by the author for further thought and action. Here there is variety indeed. Not only are his seeds gathered from the riches of the Christian spiritual masters of an earlier age, but also from such diverse sources as Gorky and Jung, Simone Weil and an ancient Chinese collection of texts known as I Ching (Book of Changes). It is unfortunate that most of the sources referred to in this stimulating book are not readily available to readers in India who will be unable to follow up the references so invitingly suggested by the author for further study. However, there are numerous quotations in the text and these help us to follow Aelred Squire as he scatters his seed.

Believing that "we are on the brink of a new culture never before seen in human history," the author urges us to grasp the facts of our time and to rediscover the meaning of our Christian faith under their impact. That this is a challenging task he would concede, but he gives a timely reminder that there is at our disposal a wealth of unused equipment and invitations to unlived experience if only we would take the trouble to discover these. Echoing Gregory of Nazianzen he laments "the kind of Christians who try never to look over the fences they have constructed around themselves" (p. 4). While Christians cannot live a strong and honest spiritual life in a cultural and human vacuum, we are assured that such a life "can be lived more honourably and easily with those who can recognize their limitations in the way that Christians ought to recognize theirs" (p. 85).

Knowing how frightened people can be when confronted by freedom or liberty of choice and how greatly they long to be offered any plausible excuse to give it up, in an especially thoughtful chapter on "Change," Squire gently advises that "The right acceptance of change, however apparently confusing or violent, is necessarily life-bringing and a challenge to the discovery of that true liberty of which change is the mysterious bearer" (p. 89). He sees that it is the experience of life with and in the service of God which alone leads us to a firmer and more realistic grasp of who we really are, His creatures, with a God-given responsibility for choice and subsequent change. While again we are warned that "a true choice avoided is invariably a choice made" (p. 193), yet we are gently helped to appreci-

ate that, with a growing sense of creatureliness, there grows also a deepening sense of compassion and concern for the world and for people around us. There comes also a personal liberation from the fetters of an apparently helpful technology thoughtlessly used as well as from the repetitive mediocrity so characteristic of modern urban society. In a telling quotation from I Ching, a Chinese farmer observes, "Why should it be thought automatically better to use everything we discover rather than to go one step further and decide that it would be better not to use it?" (p. 86). The modern reader might comment, "Why, indeed?"

In this short review it is not possible to do justice to all the material set out in this truly seminal book, but perhaps sufficient quotation has been given to illustrate something of the flavour of the text. The book repays careful reading not only on account of the somewhat elusive style of the author, but also, as he himself warns us in a paraphrase of De Caussade, "We can say of this book up to this part, as of any other, that if it is not the right moment to read it, it will only empty the heart by any kind of satisfaction it may give to the mind."

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Falsification and Belief: by Alastair McKinnon. Ridgeview Publishing Company, California, 1979. Pp. 106. Price Paperback \$ 5.00; Cloth \$ 18.00.

Traditionally the critic has argued that religious assertions were not true. Both the believer and the critic knew what they meant. The one argued for the truth of the assertion, the other against. With the advent of Logical Positivism in the twenties and thirties the attack shifted. Religious assertions were neither true nor untrue; they simply had no meaning. This short way with religious claims depended on the verification principle of meaning. However, the principle was shown to give a very inadequate account of meaning and indeed was never satisfactorily formulated. Since then philosophical criticism has become more subtle. But, as McKinnon suggests, the main criticisms can be reduced to two.

The first is that religious statements are unfalsifiable and therefore vacuous. The purpose of the falsification test was to provide a criterion of factual meaningfulness. A fact is open to falsification. If someone says, "It has stopped raining" and I go out and get wet the statement is falsified. We normally assume that religious assertions state facts. When we say that God loves the world we are asserting a fact, even though of a special kind. If, even in theory, the statement could not be falsified it would not be a statement of fact. But the strange thing about religious assertions, it is said, is that we do not allow them to be falsified. When someone produces an instance which suggests that God does not love the world we do not accept it

as doing so. This seems to indicate that religious assertions do not state facts; they are simply pious hopes.

The second line of criticism is this: the foundations of belief are undemonstrated and indemonstrable. Claims are made which not only have not been shown to be true, but which cannot be. It is especially in connection with the reality of God that this charge is made. For this is the fundamental religious assertion. If there are no firm grounds for believing it, the whole edifice of religion collapses.

McKinnon deals with these charges by examining in detail the meaning of two key religious statements, "God is Love" and "I believe in God." In answering each of the charges he relies on making a distinction between three different uses of the statements:

(a) *Assertional*. This is the ordinary use. But even this is not quite simple. Take, for example, the assertion "God is Love." We know that our particular concepts of God's love are inadequate. They may well change in the course of life. The claim that God bears a certain kind of love may be falsified. But this does not mean that the believer must give up the term love. For there may be kinds of love which are not falsified by events.

(b) *Self-Instructional*. This is what the believer says to himself. "In spite of what is happening I must keep to my conviction that God is love." He steadies himself and holds on. There is, of course, no question of falsification or lack of foundation in this usage.

(c) *Ontological-Linguistic*. This is an unusual usage but for McKinnon it is basic in answering the charges. It is linguistic because the truth of the statement follows from the way we have decided to use the key term. For example, the truth of the statement "A triangle has three interior angles" follows from the meaning of the word triangle. But the truth of the statements McKinnon is concerned with is not merely linguistic. The statements are also ontological. They are about the world and state facts. And the facts are no less facts because they follow necessarily from a certain use of a word.

Let us examine first the unfalsifiability and therefore vacuous charge. The charge is that religious assertions do not state facts. Take as an example, God is love. It is suggested that the believer will allow nothing to tell against the statement. A young man has lived a happy, successful life and finds it natural to say, "God is love." Suddenly it is found that he is dying of cancer. He will leave behind a wife and family. Can he still say God is Love? What meaning can it have?

In the assertional sense there would be some particular conception of love. This may have been falsified. It is possible that another particular sense may be substituted which is not falsified by the events. The self-instructional sense may be important. The young man tells himself that he must hold on to his conviction. But it is the ontological-linguistic sense on which McKinnon relies. The meaning of

love, he says, is determined by God's action, not by the believer's conception. The young man cannot specify the meaning of the term. He uses love to stand for the attitude of God whatever it should turn out to be. This use cannot be falsified.

I am afraid this is not convincing. It is true that God's love is not the same as human love; we use the term analogically. It is true also that we cannot specify exactly what we mean by God's love; the term is determinable and not determinate. But certainly we do not mean that the believer uses "love" to stand for the attitude of God whatever it should prove to be. On the contrary, he means that there is some likeness between the love of God and human love — else the term would not be used.

The critic maintains that the believer will allow nothing whatever to tell against the statement, "God is love." But this is not so. It is perfectly possible to specify conditions under which the statement "God is love" could not be made: if there was no joy in life, for example, and everyone lived in a state of dark depression, or if calamities happened all the time, or if effort never achieved anything. And many people have felt that events have falsified the assertion — although generally because of a limited outlook. I suppose we have all met people who after a tragic bereavement never went to church again. For them the statement "God is love" had been falsified. Because it can be falsified it is a genuine factual assertion.

For the undemonstrated and indemonstrable charge let us see how McKinnon deals with the statement "I believe in God." Again there is an assertional and a self-instructional use; these we need not go into. McKinnon's case is based on the ontological-linguistic use. This he maintains provides the foundation of religion.

McKinnon regards religion as in an important sense similar to science. Both are the outcome of a desire to understand the universe. Both pursue their quest in accordance with the basic laws of the human understanding. Both have the same kind of foundations. In the case of religion it is the search for ultimate reality. "God" is a marker for ultimate reality whatever it should prove to be. So God in this sense could not exist. Any determinate concept of God requires evidence to support the claim that it has a counterpart in reality. But in the ontological-linguistic sense we have only to know the use of the term to know that there must be something corresponding to it. No further foundation for religion is called for; the reality of God is a necessary truth. What we have to look for is a more adequate concept of God, not reasons for maintaining his reality.

Again, this does not seem to me convincing and for two reasons. First, while the primary activity in science is the search for truth about the universe, this is not the primary activity in religion. Religion is much more a way of thinking and a way of living on the basis of a God already found. In religion there is search for a more adequate concept of God but this is not what is primary. Even if, with Tillich, we define religion as ultimate concern, the word concern expresses much more than an intellectual quest like science.

Second, and this is the key issue, we do not use the word "God" to mean ultimate reality whatever that should turn out to be. Ultimate reality is a part of what we mean by God, but it is only a part. The concept has to have characteristics which make it appropriate to speak of God. For ultimate reality might turn out to be an innumerable number of elementary particles; these we would not refer to as God. To be God ultimate reality must at least have the characteristics of transcendent spirit. The first question in religion is, "Is ultimate reality quite different in nature from all proximate reality we encounter or is this all there is?". To take God in the ontological-linguistic sense as ultimate reality and search for a better conception does not answer that question. It requires evidence and interpretation to show that there is anything that can properly be called God.

While I do not agree with the argument of the book I think none the less that it should be read. It is brief and incisive and a model of good writing in the philosophy of religion. It makes clear just what the basic issues are and forces one to face them. This is important. For surely the critics are right when they say that a good number of theologians carry on as if these questions had not been raised. McKinnon has the merit of taking them seriously, even if his way of dealing with them is open to question.

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The Origins of New Testament Christology: by I. Howard Marshall.
Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1977. Pp. 132. N. p.

This useful little book by a leading British conservative evangelical scholar provides an admirable guide through the mass of secondary literature on the central topic in New Testament Theology. It limits itself to the christological titles Son of Man, Christ, Lord, Son of God and concentrates upon their background and use in the earliest post-resurrection Church. John is thus not included and Paul is set aside. Marshall finds the origins of all four titles in Judaism and concludes that the early Church's application of them to Jesus after the resurrection has roots in their own understanding of himself as Messiah and Son. Even those who are sceptical about some of these conclusions and regret the exclusion of Paul will be glad to be able to put a compact statement of an alternative view into students' hands, together with R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (Fontana, 1965), and the latest stimulating investigation by J. D. G. Dunn (SCM Press, 1980).

ROBERT MORGAN

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Mary in the New Testament: edited by Raymond E. Brown. Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1979. Pp. xii+323. Price Rs 15.00.

A valuable by-product of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogue in the U.S.A. was the composite volume produced by a task force of New Testament scholars for both Churches, on *Peter in the New Testament* (1973); it was at once translated into five languages. The scholars concerned so enjoyed their work together, and so learned from each other, that they persuaded their authorities to sponsor a similar volume on an equally divisive topic, in the hope of again seeing old problem areas in a new light. The result is an excellent and lucid book which can be used by clergy and laity as well as by professional theologians. After a brief introduction on the presuppositions of modern New Testament study, the material is worked through in roughly chronological order. Paul has little (Gal. 4:4) on the subject, but the pre-Pauline creed in Rom. 1:3-4 is closely investigated. Mark is interesting for his apparently negative attitude towards the family of Jesus (3:31-35), and the absence of Joseph at 6:3. Matthew especially and Luke naturally receive more attention, on account of their birth narratives (but also Luke 3:23; 4:16-30; 8: 19-21; 11: 27-28; Acts 1:14), and the Fourth Gospel contains even more fascinating material, above all at 19:25-27. There is an important chapter on Revelation 12 and a useful survey of Mary in the second century literature, orthodox and heretical.

The stature of the scholars involved guarantees a good book — but this is more than that. By following a fairly minor thread in the New Testament witness they have produced what could be used as an excellent introduction to New Testament study. The task force was expanded to include two Anglicans and two Presbyterians, and the whole work is an eloquent testimony to the potentials of New Testament study to contribute to ecumenical advance. It does not solve theological problems, but the study of a shared Scripture or tradition by agreed historical critical methods can produce a consensus on many issues which were formerly barriers between the Churches.

ROBERT MORGAN

To See a World: by M. A. Chignell. The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1978. Pp. xi+162. Price £ 2.25.

This is a summary of what a competent, liberal teacher of Religious Education in the secular English context considers important. Though derivative, depending heavily on other people's footnotes, such a well-written account of how many serious people think about religion and morals today could be read with profit by an interested enquirer. It speaks from a Christian background and commitment, though those who presuppose a more traditional framework of belief may find it

superficial, but the issues it raises, from sex to biblical criticism, religious pluralism and political action, confront us all.

ROBERT MORGAN.

The Myth of God Incarnate: edited by John Hick. SCM Press, London, 1977. Pp. xi+211. Price £ 2.95.

Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued: edited by Michael Goulder. SCM Press, London, 1979. Pp. xi+257. Price £ 3.50.

The recent English debate on Christology was fuelled as much by the controversial title of the offending volume as by the content of the ten essays by five Anglican and two Free Church theologians. The ambiguity of the word "myth" always causes a flutter when used in theology, and the contributors did not defuse this issue by defining in a consistent way how they are using the term. Professor Wiles provides the beginnings of a critical analysis, but the net has to be cast more widely to include literary and anthropological perspectives. The essayists consider that traditional incarnational language has gone dead on rationalistic European minds such as their own, and should therefore be buried, or at least banished from doctrinal discussion and used only in the language of worship. Since historical research on Christian origins has been a factor in this, over half the volume is given over to two substantial essays by Frances Young on the New Testament and patristic development and a more speculative attempt by Michael Goulder to discover the "two roots of the Christian myth" in Samaria, and to present them as "The man of universal destiny." The other contributors are all hostile to dogma, preferring an "experiential mode" (Leslie Houlden), and considering the incarnation dogma unfortunate in its political consequences (Don Cupitt) or bad for inter-religious dialogue (John Hick), or inadequately grounded in the historical data (Dennis Nineham). These essays are critical and probing, rather than constructive — and that makes the total effect frustrating. Doctrinal criticism is necessary, and essays which stimulate thought serve a purpose. But if leading theologians wish to make a radical proposal which rides roughshod over the piety of millions, one wants to know more of how will they understand the tradition they are attacking, and what exactly they wish to put in its place. Theological criticism today should surely be done (as Schleiermacher did it) in the context of serious theological reconstruction. The dogma of the incarnation must be rethought in each generation if it is to remain intelligible; these essays give few hints that this is in fact happening. Schillebeeckx, Ranner, Moltmann, Jüngel, even Schleiermacher, Barth, Hegel and Whitehead are significantly absent from the index. One is left with the impression that "The doctrine of the incarnation" can only mean the particular theological explications on which three writers were nurtured, and which they have (perhaps rightly) outgrown.

The book provoked a hasty response entitled *The Truth of God Incarnate* edited by Michael Green, and starring the veteran Bishop Stephen Neill. This slight paperback contains a judicious review by John Macquarrie and a timely reminder by the Bishop that Christology is essentially doctrine about God, not simply about the historical Jesus. But it fails to face squarely the issues which the liberals are raising, and partly justifies the original essays; it is not a helpful contribution to the discussion. An American colloquium book, on the other hand, entitled *The Myth/Truth of God Incarnate* contains an excellent essay by Richard Norris which shows what an umbrella term "The Doctrine of the Incarnation" is.

The "official" second SCM volume contains a debate between the original seven, and more traditional Cambridge-centred opponents, including Stephen Sykes, Brian Hebblethwaite, Nicholas Lash, John Rodwell (a botanist-cum-theologian) with Professor Moule and his pupil Graham Stanton representing one strand of English New Testament scholarship. The debate material is organised thematically in thirty-five snippets, and contains much that is worth reading. One may be grateful to the publishers for making accessible a theological discussion which takes us to the heart of Christian belief and worship, while agreeing with Professor Sykes that "the present situation in theology ... requires a very different kind of direction and method from the one which seems to have imposed itself on the authors of *The Myth*" (p. 116).

ROBERT MORGAN

The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India: by John C.B. Webster. Macmillan of India, Delhi, 1976. Pp. 272. Price Rs 65.00.

This is not an easy book to review, because this calls for expertise in history of Christian missions and Indian history, as well as the dynamics of social change. Since such combinations are rare, particularly among historians of Christianity, the reviewer could be as guilty of superficiality and failure to perceive and relate the issues arising out of these disciplines, as the author himself. Nevertheless, if this book seeks to demonstrate a new approach to the treatment of history of Christianity, particularly the history of Christian missions in trying to understand it as a socio-religious factor shaping Indian history, the author certainly needs to be commended for his spirit of adventure and pioneering.

This book seeks to examine the role of Christians in U.P. and the Punjab, in the changes in that region up to the outbreak of the first world war. The enquiry is based on these assumptions: (1) the Christians of the Nineteenth Century Punjab and United Provinces were a community; (2) this community interacted with other communities in the Punjab and the United Provinces; and (3) such interaction brought about numerous changes both within and beyond the Christian community (p. 9). The author also assumes that the growth, develop-

ments and interactions of various denominational groups within the Christian community were similar enough to warrant generalisations from a study of the North Indian and Punjab missions of the American Presbyterian Church.

The author, in examining the work of the American Presbyterian missions in India with which he has historical and emotional ties, has succeeded relatively well in maintaining an unbiased attitude. First he deals with the cultural and theological background of the American Presbyterian missionaries, which shaped their attitude to Indian socio-religious and cultural trends and their encounter with the Indian people. Then he goes on to discuss the Indian Christians, and this section is in remarkable contrast to the subject matter of missionaries dealt with earlier. Indian converts appear as faceless shadowy silhouettes. Not only are the names few, but the details about them are also scanty. Their presence is indicated through statistical tables of caste background or rural or urban classifications. It must be said, in fairness to the author, that the bulk of the source material for his investigation — the missionary records — are woefully scanty on Indian converts. However, if the author wishes to portray the Indian Christian community, he ought to lean less heavily on easily accessible missionary records, and sweat and toil to find more about Indian Christians, their hopes, aspirations and relationships. The chapter on religious controversy between missionaries and Indians of other religious persuasions, barring one or two exceptions, presents those Indians as faceless, part of a crowd or members of an organisation like Arya Samaj. The role of Indian converts is largely that of being a bone of contention between missionaries and other religious communities, to generate rivalry and rebuttals. This does not quite hold true to the assertion of the author that "...foreign missionaries and Indian converts in North India are treated as belonging to a single community" (p. 8), because the author, primarily, deals with the missionaries and their opponents. The other component of this community only serves as a backdrop. Therefore, the title of the book, more suitably, should have been *The Christian Missionaries and Change ...* rather than *'The Christian Community and Change ...'*

The assertion that missionaries and Christians in North India formed one single community also glosses over one important element of change, that is, the interaction between Indian Christians and missionaries. The author has shown awareness of this interaction (pp. 209 ff.), but he has failed to perceive that this could be an important factor in bringing about changes. In fact, he has either ignored or was ignorant of the associations of Indian Christians in U.P. and the Punjab which sought freedom from mission control and were keen on running their own affairs. For example, he refers to the Indian Christian Association in 1911, which represented a more ingrained attitude of Indian Christians rather than the militant outgoing associations prior to 1906, for example the Indian Christian Association of North Western Frontier Provinces and Oudh in 1891 which had branches all over U.P.

The author's understanding of the communal situation in India, and the process by which Christians in India were identified as a community, borders on the superficial. First he has used the term "community" in two distinct senses. In the first sense he has used it as a "biradari," a loose-knit organisation existing among some Hindu outcaste groups. Secondly he has also used the same term to denote members of a religious affiliation such as Hindus, Muslims and so on. This naturally causes confusion. What he has failed to see is that these two phenomena arise out of the same deep-seated complexes within the Aryan-dominated Hindu Society, i.e. megalomania and xenophobia. First, this resulted in caste and sub-caste groupings within Hindu society and, later, with the entry of Muslims, extended to demarcation of lines between the Hindus and the Muslims. Thus, when the Christian missionaries arrived, the norm of a person deriving his identity from his religious community was well established. Therefore, it was inevitable that Christians must achieve such an identity. The movements among the Indian Christians indicated in the earlier paragraph were, largely, in search of such an identity. The author has failed to understand this phenomenon and also failed to make use of this important agent of change inherent within Indian society.

In the chapter on religious controversy the author seems to think that religious controversy aroused through missionary preaching "did encourage the growth of stereotypes of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism" (p. 120). While this could be true of Christianity, this is certainly not true of other religious communities. The lines between them were drawn long before the missionaries arrived in India. It is true that the kind of controversies in terms of debates, literary attacks and somewhat decent heckling were new. But the credit for this goes more to British rule, its inherent democratic values, development of communications including printing presses etc., than to the Protestant missionaries. In the pre-British days such religious nationalism took the form of violent conflicts, for example, those between Sikhs and Muslims, and Marathas and Muslims.

The fact of the Indian renaissance in the 19th Century is not mentioned, although the author has dealt with the developments resulting from it. The modes in which religious controversy was carried out, for example the use of rationalism, and a resurgence of religions by incorporating new values which sharpened the controversies, were the results of the renaissance which spread through India in the 19th Century. In fact, not only that, behind much of the changes in 19th Century India lay the renaissance. Hence the two factors of change, the British rule and the renaissance are conspicuously absent. These might have given a balanced perspective on the role of Christians in change.

The concluding part, where the author compares his thesis with that of other historians and sociologists, is useful in providing different perspectives. However, it is not clear how this helps the author's basic thesis of the nature of change affected through Christianity.

They differ only in terms of the significance of this role, according to their individual perspectives.

Certain dates need to be corrected, because inaccurate dates could prove embarrassing for a historian, e.g. p. 251, last paragraph. The Decennial Missionary Conferences were held: Allahabad: 1872-73, Calcutta: 1882-83, Bombay: 1892-93, Madras: December 1903. The first three began in the last week of December and ended in the first week of January.

The printing of the book is of a high order and the photograph on the jacket of some 19th Century Presbyterians in various dresses is very suggestive of the contents of the book.

As it has already been stated, the author needs to be congratulated on adopting a new approach in drawing the history of Christianity in India closer to the socio-political developments in this country, and making the history of Christianity an integral part of India.

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English-Urdu Dictionary of Christian Terminology: by Liberius Pieterse OFM. Ed. Jan Slomp. Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi, 1976. Pp. xxviii+108. Price Rs 15.00 inside Pakistan; \$3.00 outside Pakistan.

This small dictionary represents an ecumenical effort of the Christians of Pakistan; and the emblem of the World Council of Churches is appropriately displayed on the dust jacket. The initiative in preparing a glossary of the Christian terminology came from Fr Liberius, a Roman Catholic Missionary from Holland. He had already started work on it prior to 1960. The Protestants had been making similar experiments since 1951, in which the Rt Revd. W. G. Young put in much hard work. From 1968 Roman Catholics and Protestants decided to cooperate "to reduce the already existing confusion regarding terminology." The drafts were revised a number of times in which two Muslim scholars also cooperated.

The Dictionary consists of about 6,500 words of which the nearest Urdu equivalents are given without any explanations or illustrations. The editor says this was not done, since this would have "tripled the size of the book" (p. xx). While this dictionary could be useful for many Christians in Pakistan and elsewhere, this can barely fulfil its stated aim, "to provide a tool for those who have to teach theology or wish to write in or translate into Urdu theological works" (p. v). Translation, as the editor himself admits, is a complex task and cannot be accomplished by providing equivalents. Applications of the word together with illustrations are essential if the translation is to carry the sense of the original in another language. Nevertheless, the editor and the committee ought to be commended for taking a step in the right direction. They need to go much further to accomplish their

stated aim. Most of the words found in this Dictionary are more commonly in use in Roman Catholic circles.

The most valuable part of this Dictionary is the four introductory essays. The first one explains the purpose of the Dictionary, and the second one gives hints about how to use the Dictionary. The third one gives a brief history of the preparation of the Dictionary. All three of these essays are valuable not only as a guide to the Dictionary, but also in providing insights about selection of meaning in relation to the connotation of the word and historical and cultural background. The most valuable of these essays is, however, the fourth one written by Drs Jan Slomp, who eventually edited the volume: "Theological and Linguistic Background of this Dictionary." In this essay Drs Slomp not only enumerates the principles which have gone into the making of this Dictionary, but he also outlines some of the problems faced by a translator. As far as Urdu is concerned, he sees this as "transfer from a Latinized culture to an Arabicised culture" (p. xvi). However in pointing out that Latin began to dominate the religious culture of many European nations, he points out an important fact which needs to be borne in mind by a translator in relation to the language of his culture. Another important point he makes is that it is not the term which matters, but the frame of reference and the context. The languages of the East, which are rich in religious terminology, could serve as important vehicles for liberating theology from its "Latin captivity" (p. xvii). This essay could prove a valuable guide to anyone engaged in translation of Christian Scriptures and other literature.

However, this essay was written after the work was completed. Hence, many of the ideas have not been put to use in this Dictionary. This could prove a starting point for those who wish to go ahead with a more comprehensive dictionary for Urdu knowing Christians.

The Dictionary also contains a fairly comprehensive bibliography of theological dictionaries and dictionaries in various other languages. The printing and the binding of the book are attractive. I could find only one printing error. On pg. ix "l" is missing from the word school in the second paragraph.

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A Christian Social Perspective: by Alan Storkey. Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1979. Pp. 416. Price £ 6.00.

This book is the most substantial British evangelical contribution to a Christian outlook on life yet, providing a critique of sociology and economics whose lack has been felt in student circles for some considerable time — at least as long as the decade which has gone by since the author began to write it when he was appointed first Director of the I.V.F. (now U.C.C.F.) Shaftesbury Project. The book has been produced in a style — and at a price — which suggests that it is intended to enter college bookshops and compete with its secular

counterparts. One should perhaps underline *secular* counterparts as the author writes as a sociologist and an economist rather than a theologian, as will become clear. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the author's disclaimer (p. 12) that he is not laying down a new evangelical orthodoxy will be heeded, both for the reasons he states, that a pioneering work of this kind cannot be definitive either in scope or conclusions, and on account of the questions raised here.

Storkey is concerned that Christians in Britain should become aware that they are living in a society which is almost totally based on non-Christian if not positively anti-Christian values. Understanding of this should be followed by concerted (not just individual) action at every level of society, both within existing institutions and through setting up Christian ones. Thus the author's intention is practical, but he is less concerned with making concrete suggestions for action than with providing a rationale for them. In brief, the argument is as follows.

All social relationships are based on an implicit if not explicit world view, which has changed in Britain from a Reformation-era belief based on man and nature's relation to God, to a post-Enlightenment assertion of autonomy in every sphere of life. This denial of the existence of objective norms and values external to society has, it is maintained, resulted in the springing up of mutually exclusive social and economic theories based either on the value and rights of the individual, or on some collective identity such as the state, a trade union, professional association or company. The practical consequences of pursuing either approach have proved uniformly unsatisfactory, but recognition of this result has been hindered by another aspect of belief in autonomous meaning, the blunting of moral perception. It is generally believed that what happens has to happen, or just happens, or is *ipso facto* good. Such determinism or evolutionary optimism is more explicitly presented in social theory but again it has been masked, this time by attempts to show that sociological and economic perspectives are "scientific" in the sense of being descriptive and value-free.

This is a discredited view of the physical sciences, as the author points out, but his main argument is much more comprehensive. A Christian social perspective, based primarily on the doctrines of creation, sin, and redemption (pp. 136-139), plus the kingdom of God (pp. 410-413), denies the principle of absolute autonomy and all its consequences. Positively, such a perspective is the only way of resolving the fundamental individualism-collectivism tension, and it is the sole foundation for an adequate approach to social theory and practice. The general biblical basis for this outlook is to be reinforced by deductions from Old Testament principles. These are to be taken as normative for understanding the role of the state (pp. 294-313), for economic organisation (pp. 336-344, 351f.), as well as for personal social relationships (p. 169). The latter are also to be guided by the example of Jesus (pp. 188, 192), which is also the norm

for relations with civil authority (pp. 144f.), although here the behaviour of the apostles (Acts 4:19f.) is cited as well.

At this point it is convenient to make some general observations on the book as a whole before returning to individual chapters.

The first, and major, question is raised by the brief discussion of biblical exegesis which asserts that "As long as people do not interpret the Scriptures in the light of their own ideas, there can be substantial agreement about what it means" (p. 123). As an apologia for the traditional Roman Catholic way of guiding the faithful this would be quite unremarkable, but that is not something this author would entertain. He gives various examples of the way scripture may be misinterpreted, and acknowledges that his own "response to the authoritative truth of the Word of God is in no way proof against error" (p. 129), but it is not clear if he realises that the fact that nobody can escape importing ideas into their exegesis seriously weakens his first statement.

The second question arises out of the first. For even if it is granted that there can be "substantial agreement" on the meaning of Scripture, when we come to detailed application it has to be noted that the author's interpretations almost all stem from one school of thought, the Dutch Calvinistic (Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Van Til). Others are not considered, which both deprives the reader of a potentially creative discussion and, as a narrow basis, rather devalues the idea of "substantial agreement."

Mention of this theological insularity (which of course has the advantage of indicating the author's point of view clearly, and avoids the discursive style of Wogaman's book which will be mentioned later) brings us to some other examples of a limited outlook. The brief discussion of the Christian attitude to the state, which concludes, "Wrongly used authority should be opposed in principle and through suffering and even martyrdom, rather than through violence and revolution" because "sovereign power lies in God's hands not man's" (p. 145), reminds us that this book is written from a British perspective. The conclusion may be correct, although as Christians have seen and honoured Bonhoeffer and Camillo Torres as well as Charles de Foucauld and Gandhi, the question is not neatly resolved for everyone. Readers in situations where the question of revolution is a much more pressing one will require more sustained analysis and argument than is offered here. Similarly, Storkey's argument that the guiding principle of the state is justice (pp. 294 f., 302-310) could do with more elaboration. The biblical exegesis might well have been supplemented by an assessment of contemporary Anglo-American philosophical discussion (cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, OUP, Oxford, 1972, and the critique of R.P. Wolff, *Understanding Rawls*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977), if not by consideration of WCC or Roman Catholic outlooks. In the latter respect a useful and wide-ranging collection of papers from the Jesuit Woodstock Theological Center, New York (*The Faith that does Justice*, ed. J. C. Haughey, Paulist Press, New York, 1977) might be read in conjunction with the

recently published addresses of the General of the Order (*Justice with Faith Today* by P. Arrupe S. J., Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis, U.S.A., and Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Anand, India, 1980).

A third example of the book's restricted focus is that international concerns like relations with the Common Market or the Third World, and problems of resources and conservation are only mentioned in passing. It is true of course that the author has had to be selective and there is a sense in which the treatment of the less dramatic problems which Britain faces makes the book *more* valuable rather than less for readers in Asia. For there has been an equal selectivity in writing which has come out of the Third World situation which has perhaps made people blind to more subtle issues. In addition to this, talk about demonic social or economic structures has sometimes tended to generate more heat than light, in contrast to Storkey's more restrained analysis of their positive and negative aspects. However, having said that, and also recognised the value of dealing with matters that are both relevant to the greatest number of the book's intended readers and relatively manageable — for clearly the *last* thing the author wants to do is to encourage the general *laissez-faire* attitude which pervades British Christian reaction to social issues — one question remains unanswered. Is there a biblically based Christian perspective on these global problems of energy conservation, nuclear power, food production, etc.? Or is one left with the rather hesitant position which the WCC has come to since the demise of the Biblical Theology Movement in the late 1960s and which finds present expression in the theological sections of *Faith Science and the Future* (Geneva, 1978)?

One way forward suggested by Paulos Gregorios in *The Human Presence: an Orthodox View of Nature* (WCC, Geneva, 1978) is that these problems should be tackled by a Christian community. He imagines that the members would be living together for five or ten years to think through these issues whilst being earthed in the society around them, and showing by their lifestyle (as well as their spirituality) that alternatives to the general goals of the rich third of the world can make sense in every respect.

This idea reminds one that discussion of the possible contribution of Christian communities is missing from Storkey's book. He rejects the traditional belief that "Christians should bury themselves one by one in the world as isolated grains of salt, and that collective action is separatist" (p. 409), and argues for the setting up of Christian institutions. But by this is meant such concerns as newspapers, housing trusts, schools and firms. The idea of residential communities of individuals or families is not considered. Perhaps the omission is related to his negative assessment of the institutional Church (chapter 15), but even if Storkey has no personal sympathy for the idea of a worship-centred community as a sign of the Kingdom in the traditional manner as so ably argued by Thomas Merton in *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Doubleday Image, New York, 1973) and elsewhere, or in the various ecumenical and lay forms investigated by Andrew Lockley in *Christian Communes* (SCM Press, London, 1976),

the logic of his basic argument demands that the matter be taken seriously.

For if it is true that the Christian lives in a society in which the values of every social institution — marriage, the family, the neighbourhood, the economy, the mass media, education, politics, and the arts — are at variance with his own, how is he going to maintain his position? It is all very well to assert that the choice between individualist and collectivist responses is shown to be false in the light of Christian doctrine—

Why do I need to be right when God is my judge, and why do I need to compare myself with others when my relationship with God is unique? Why the pretence of self-righteousness when God knows my sin? Why retreat into privacy when, O Lord, you have searched me and known me? Why search for my pleasure when joy is a gift from God? ... Why do you try to create an image when you are in the image of God ...? When accepted by God, why do we need to be accepted by one group or another? (p. 168 f.)

— but the question remains, how is this truth to be made real? If humanist values are transmitted by social institutions rather than by verbal formulations, how are Christian ones passed on? Both theology and psychology would point towards the valuable function of the eucharistic community in this, particularly in the vital matter (stressed by Storkey, p. 169) of keeping personal relationships open through repentance and forgiveness.

One last topic upon which both theology and the social sciences have something to contribute is that of vocation, and here for once, it is the social aspect that could do with less cursory treatment, particularly as Storkey is so concerned throughout the book to point out the errors of individualism. For after Luther brought the idea of vocation into the market place in the Sixteenth Century, there was an equally significant change in the Nineteenth Century. For the middle class at least, it was transformed from a static to a dynamic concept. Due to such factors as an expanding economy, increased social mobility and division of labour, there emerged a functionally differentiated and individualistic understanding of vocation which emphasised personal choice. The opportunities and dilemmas involved were reflected in both biographical and fictional writing, as A. Mintz outlines at the beginning of his study of *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation* (Harvard, 1978).

If we turn our attention from an overall view of *A Christian Social Perspective*, and the substantial treatments of "A Christian view of the state" (chapter 12), "Economic Perspectives" (chapter 13) leading into "A Christian Economic Perspective" (chapter 14), which have already been referred to, there are several other chapters worthy of note.

Chapter 2 provides a solid analysis of the philosophical foundations of sociology and of recent attempts to make it "value-free." Chapter

3 is a parallel discussion of epistemology which likewise concludes that every theory has proved unsatisfactory, both in terms of what it was supposed to explain and also on theological grounds, for "the false step is to move away from the Christian coherence of truth in God, and to seek a basis for knowledge in some aspect of the world" (p. 105 f.). What we need to realise, it is argued, is that the doctrines of creation and sin indicate that, whilst the natural order is in principle knowable, its fulness, unity and coherence in God is hidden from finite and sinful man. He can have no single viewpoint from which to observe it, and as the creation has moral value, the mixture of good and evil must be discerned before the whole can be understood, through God's revelation.

This thesis is elaborated in relation to sociology in chapter 5 which brings out the key additional point (pp. 140-142) that the ban on having any single viewpoint or false integration point within creation implies that the basic social institutions (marriage, family, state, education, Church, work) are all ordained by God with their own integrity and should not control or dominate one another. This principle of "sphere sovereignty" (which is asserted rather than argued) has many implications. One of these is that democracy worthy of the name is far more than a matter of participation in representative government. It

involves the principles of the rule of law, the absence of sovereign and autocratic government, the recognition of checks on the sinfulness of government and governed, the doctrine of office as service of God and man, the principles of impartiality, toleration, and peace, the rise of state coercion only within a framework of justice (pp. 312 f.),

the latter being a theological question mark against nationalisation to be considered along with all the economic objections (pp. 310, 329 f.).

Problems in social institutions stem, it is argued, from individualist or collectivist responses which also harm free social relations. Analysis of egocentric and manipulative reactions on the one hand, and concern with image, acceptability and status on the other (chapter 6), leads into a discussion of community and class (chapter 7) and then into consideration of the closest of human relationships: marriage (chapter 8) and the family (chapter 9). Chapters six, eight and nine could well form a book on their own and be the basis of a couple of study groups, especially if the points made in these quite tightly written 80-odd pages were to be fleshed out by personal experience, the case studies of Paul Tournier, and Eric Erikson's, Erich Fromm's or Thomas Merton's treatments of aspects of identity and community. A completely different kind of debate might be based on chapter 10 which discusses the effects of mass media, particularly television. Research is still at an early stage, but if present indications that the control, presentation, content, and inherent technical factors of television *all* conspire to reduce the perception and communication of truth are proved to be correct, this should temper enthusiasm to spread broadcasting to every part of Asia as quickly as possible.

In conclusion, *A Christian Social Perspective* has permanent value as a whole and for the individual parts mentioned. It is also significant as an indicator of the current state of evangelical social awareness in Britain—or at least among some people, for it will be noted that the publishers have thought it fitting to bring out an apologia for social involvement at the same time by the present Director of the Shaftesbury Project, John Gladwin, *God's People in God's World* (InterVarsity Press, Leicester, 1979). Storkey's book should be placed on the shelf next to J. P. Wogaman's *A Christian Method of Moral Judgement* (SCM Press, London, 1976) with which it may be usefully compared. The latter's style demands several chapters to reach conclusions not dissimilar from those crisply listed by Storkey (pp. 136-139), but it has the merit of taking in more alternative views on the way as well as applying principles to another society, that of North America. Both books should not be too far away from those of Jacques Ellul, and one hopes that this group will be joined in time by others, not only from authors with the sociological and economic background of Alan Storkey, but from theologians also.

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Jesus the Man and the Myth: by J. P. Mackey. SCM Press, London, 1979. Pp. viii + 311. Price £ 4.95.

As the title suggests, this book is an exercise in Christology "from below" which argues that both history and myth must be taken seriously. The author writes with an enviable facility in lucid non-technical language of current issues in Christology and his own suggestions for understanding Jesus today. He adopts an attractive, almost conversational style which carries the reader along very nearly past points where he might wish to pause and question the basic assumption that "all talk which seems to proceed from God's side and to explain how the utterly transcendent God relates to our empirical world is really talk which proceeds from the human side and explains how the human spirit can travel toward the utterly transcendent God" (pp. 220 f.).

An introductory chapter outlining the points raised by the quest for the historical Jesus leads into a discussion of the death of Jesus and its meaning, "the myth that grew around the facts." As Mackey understands it, a myth is "a symbol or a series of symbols developed in the form of a story," and the point of a symbol is that it has power to evoke several levels of human experience at the same time. "The symbols which are used to express the significance of Jesus' death... are all powerfully evocative of the fragile and decaying side of our experience of life" and, appealing to the emotion and will as well as the mind, they declare that we are "freed for a new and true access in and through our empirical existence to the true God" (pp. 78, 80 ff.).

Myth and symbol are one way to knowledge of the self and of God, the other way is through conceptual analysis. By a constant redefinition of concepts, "the spirit is impelled along a trajectory until it reaches a point at which all recognisable content has been analytically adjusted to the stage of disappearance, and again all that is left is the conviction that the direction is correct" (p. 216). In both cases, Mackey warns, "the process may come to a premature halt, and what can only be called idolatry can result, either by yielding to the temptation to take a symbol literally at some point, or by ceasing to adjust a concept and leaving it with still too much empirical content. In either case one reaches a 'god' too much delimited on human terms ... too well understood and too easily manipulated" (p. 217).

This is well said, and well illustrated in the discussion of the limitations of the patristic attempts at defining the person of Christ, but would all Mackey's readers agree with him in their definition of the place of "premature halt," particularly in the light of his further statement that myths are earth-bound? "Myths which move at that depth of human experience where ultimate questions are asked ... do not convey any literal information about worlds other than this one" (pp. 194 f.). This question is especially pressing with regard to his discussion of the resurrection and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, in which the reader is rapidly shifted from assertions that, whilst Jesus' personal resurrection is "explicitly presupposed" and "clearly implied" by Paul, his primary interest was its existential impact (pp. 99, 114, 194), to declarations of agnosticism, and then to a choice between fact and significance, or between past and present experience. We may not have any *details* of the personal resurrection of Jesus or of the final resurrection of believers (p. 105), but that is not the same thing as arguing that the New Testament treats these two resurrections in exactly the same way (and the same problem arises from Mackey's understanding of the birth and baptism of Jesus, pp. 268 ff.).

The drift of Mackey's argument is more clearly revealed when he says that the gospels, like Paul, make it seem "preferable to conclude that Jesus is experienced as source of Spirit, new life, faith and in this way known to be alive with God, rather than conclude that Jesus was known to have been revived after death, because certain people saw, felt, dined with him, and therefore we are entitled to believe such and such a claim made by or about him" (p. 110). For, as he says later on, no symbols like these can describe "in literal detail an actual event in the history of the man Jesus which can be situated in a particular moment of time ... or at a particular place" (p. 191). But here again, the question of classification must be asked. Does the New Testament treat the exaltation, ascension, session at the right hand of power and spirit breathing in exactly the same way? As far as the resurrection and the ascension are concerned do we have to choose between event and interpretation? Is there no way in which faith and miracle may be related, no way that miracle can be proof as well as part of the message? How much does Mackey's distaste for the miraculous

(p. 269) and agnosticism about the resurrection really differ from Bultmann's disinterest in the historical Jesus and stress on the preached word, which he criticises (pp. 93, 114, 252-256)?

After discussing seven different interpretations of the role of the resurrection in New Testament preaching, Mackey moves on to summarise the life of Jesus under the headings parables, prayer, miracles and meals. Again, one may want to say more than the author does on miracles and the Eucharist, but his existential insights, particularly in his concise delineation of the message of the parables, and in discussion of the symbolic significance of meals in general, are most valuable. Perhaps the most interesting part of this chapter is the discussion of the possibility and even the necessity of talking about the personal faith of Jesus (pp. 159-171). This road, closed by Aquinas and Bultmann, has been reopened by writers like Moran, Ebeling and Fuchs. To these, mentioned by Mackey, one might add the contribution on the ethical front by H. R. Niebuhr (*The Responsible Self*, New York: Harpers, 1963), and one from contemporary South American theology by J. Sobrino (*Christology at the Crossroads*, London: SCM Press, 1978).

It is a fair point (Mackey, pp. 169 ff.) that Jesus could not have really communicated a faith that he did not practise himself, but the question arises as to how much a shift in focus from faith *in* Jesus to faith *of* Jesus upsets the very nice balance between discipleship and imitation that we find in the New Testament.

From Jesus and the gospels the book moves to a brief discussion of the Pauline categories of interpretation and of Christological titles like "Word of God" and "Son of God" which Mackey believes can still communicate powerfully because of their link with universal human experience. This archetypal quality is lacking in the patristic formulations, but Mackey tries to salvage something from Chalcedon whilst emphasising (pp. 210-247) the basis in vital Christian experience of the rejection of Arianism, and suggesting that today's formulations of that experience should be less precise and more prosaic: "For those who say the Nicene creed to this day it is the ordinary history of their world, as shaped by the historical Jesus, that puts them in the presence of God" (p. 264).

On such a text Mackey's book is an excellent commentary well supplied (in the notes) with suggestions for further reading, but the reader unsatisfied with this definition of transcendence (cf. pp. 259 ff.) will have to look beyond it.

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Explorations in Theology 3: by J. L. Houlden. SCM Press, London, 1978. Pp. viii+120. Price £ 3.25.

The title under review is the third volume in a new series in which a selection of studies by a leading British theologian is presented. The author of this volume is Lecturer in New Testament Studies at King's College, University of London.

The volume contains altogether ten essays written over several years for different occasions, and thus they are limited in scope and thinking. The essays as given here are extracted from their original setting and perhaps for that reason at times appear as mere thinking aloud on certain Christian doctrines in the light of recent theological research.

In the essay on "The Bible and the Faith" (1968), the author attempts to unravel the priorities set in course of time in the formulation of doctrine and in the use of the Scriptures. In this attempt the author sets forth three ways by which the relation between Scripture and Faith is regarded. He concludes that any doctrine which does not take into account the central datum of the Scriptures and appropriate it to the present day must be deemed to be defective.

The essay on "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Christ" has as its purpose to examine the connections between various ways of stating some fundamental doctrines of the faith, since normally in the official formularies and in theological discussion, they are not clearly distinguished. He starts by examining the use of Scriptures in arriving at a doctrine which may not have any theological significance but may have been believed in, without integrating the same into the pattern of one's belief. He shows how the concept of the pre-existence of Christ played a crucial role in arriving at the relationship between the Trinity and the Person of Christ. Finally, the author attempts to provide a viable solution to the issue from a human point of view, moving away from the mythological hangover of the past.

In "The Place of Jesus," the author examines the language of the Scriptures in arriving at a Christology which could have been only in a language hyperbolic rather than sober, since the writers found themselves at a loss to express that experience of Christ in suitable terminology. Thus, "the Christological statements of the New Testament are 'projections' in ostensibly descriptive and liberal language of experience concerning God and the World" to which Jesus gave a new perspective.

In "Good Liturgy or even Good Battlefield," the author writes a critique on the recent Holy Communion Service Liturgy (1966), in which the central clause is worded: "We offer this bread and this cup."

The author unravels the traditional relationship between sacrifice and the Eucharist in his essay of the same title, and shows how the image of sacrifice has been not only taken from the Old Testament but also seen now as a continuing Godward sacrifice offered at the Eucharist in the traditional understanding, although many other interpretations devoid of sacrificial understanding could be credible.

On the whole the essays make interesting reading. The essays are thought-provoking, and attempt to extract the truth about some fundamental doctrines of the faith from the traditional mythological concepts and other imagery to arrive at a viable doctrine which coin-

cides with the central theme of the Scriptures and with reality today. The author writes in a simple style with a touch of humour. The book would be useful for theological students and teachers alike.

ARUNKUMAR WESLEY

Karnataka Theological College, Mangalore

What in the World is the World Council of Churches? WCC, Geneva, 1978. Pp. 86. Price SFr 7.90.

This brief volume is no. 1 in the Risk Book Series. It is indeed a useful hand book on the World Council of Churches as it attempts to unravel some of the confusion and to share some of the excitement the Council has generated in its first thirty years. The text provides a collection of essential information about the WCC: What it is, how it works, who it involves, what it does and so on.

The first section consists of an interview with Philip Potter, the General Secretary of the WCC, which reveals the present mood and direction of the ecumenical movement. The remaining sections speak of the story of the WCC—its birth, childhood, growth into maturity and its concerns. The text is prepared by Ans J. van der Bent, and is supplemented by a comprehensive set of appendices providing reference material about the WCC. Carefully documented with pictures, charts, statistics, this book is indeed a rich resource for those who are interested in the ecumenical movement and particularly useful for teachers and students of that subject.

PHILIPOS THOMAS

Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam

Christian-Jewish Relations in Ecumenical Perspective with Special Emphasis on Africa: edited by Franz Von Hammerstein. WCC, Geneva, 1978. Pp. vii+146. Price SFr 8.90.

Unity in Today's World: edited by Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz. WCC, Geneva, 1978. Pp. 239. Price SFr 16.50.

These two books further add to the recent WCC publications. The first one is a comprehensive report on the Conference of the WCC Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People held at Jerusalem June 16-26, 1977. Organised under the auspices of the Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, an attempt was made here to bring together biblical scholars from various Christian traditions and nationalities to discuss and evaluate the relationship between Jews and Christians. As the title suggests special emphasis is given to Africa. It is ironical that African participants are compara-

tively few in number. A few African, Asian and Jewish guests were included in the Consultation in addition to the regular participants.

This event is unique in its own right. The second International Missionary Conference held in Jerusalem in 1928 recommended a standing committee on the "Christian Approach to the Jews." After five decades of important developments in Christian-Jewish relations this committee, now reconstituted as the WCC "Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People" met for the first time in Jerusalem. This definitely brings new hopes to the minds of many. The present volume contains all the major papers presented at the Conference with responses and comments, reports of workshops and Bible Study notes. There is a special section on African contributions. A useful bibliography on other WCC publications on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies is added at the end.

The second book is a Faith and Order Study Paper, no. 88 in the series, dealing with the theme "Unity of the Church—Unity of Humankind." The first part of this book is mainly a summary and evaluation by the author on the development of this theme in ecumenical thinking from Edinburgh and Oxford 1937 to Nairobi 1975. As a result of his careful research of relevant documents produced in the World Conferences and study groups of various types during the period, he establishes that this theme is not simply a Faith and Order theme, but basically and fundamentally perhaps the most important theme of the ecumenical movement as a whole. The Life and Work and the Faith and Order movements and the World Council of Churches through all its five assemblies from Amsterdam to Nairobi emphasised this vital theme of "unity." It was at Uppsala 1968 that the study on "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind" gathered great momentum. And in Nairobi 1975 the spectrum was widened further to include "Unity of the Church—Unity of Humankind—Unity of Creation." This development of the theme is definitely in keeping with the times.

Part two is a collection of selected reactions and comments on the theme from various quarters, crossing the boundaries of nationality, culture, religion and academic discipline. John Deschner's concluding comments are worth noting. He even feels that this study marks a turning point in the history of the Faith and Order movement in that the central issue in the Church unity problem is now turning away from the traditional denominational divisions to a more contemporary focus which also takes into account the human divisions which invade and divide the Church.

The book is well documented and a chronological survey of studies on the theme is added in an appendix. A selected bibliography completes the volume.

Both these books call for deeper study and reflection by all those who are interested in the subject.

PHILIPOS THOMAS

Church History 3: New Movements A.D. 1500-1800: by Alan Thomson. S.P.C.K., London, 1976. Pp. 176. Price: paperback £2.95; special edition for Africa, Asia, S. Pacific and Caribbean £1.95.

This book is no. 14 in the TEF Study Guide series and no. 3 in the Church History section. It deals with the period A.D. 1500-1800, highlighting the various movements and the contributions of important leaders. Divided into ten chapters with a conclusion added to that, it provides a brief outline of the Reformation in Europe under the leadership of Martin Luther, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, the Radical Reformers, Reformation in England and Catholic Reformation. One feels happy that the term "Counter Reformation" is avoided in dealing with the Catholic Reformation. The later chapters deal with the Roman Catholic missions under the "Padroado," the rise of Puritanism in America, the Pietist movement in Europe and the Methodist movement in England.

The author concludes that, with the rise of these movements in the West, the foundations of the world-wide mission in the succeeding centuries and the founding of the world-wide Church were set. Compared with the two previous volumes in Church History in this series the present one is smaller both in content and size, but definitely useful. One looks forward hopefully to the next and final volume in this series dealing with the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.

Maps, charts and pictures are provided wherever possible. The time chart given at the end is very useful in locating important events and dates of important personalities. As in previous volumes "a key to study suggestions" and index are also provided.

PHILIPOS THOMAS