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BOOK REVIEWS

A CENTURY OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY by W.D. Hudson. London: Lutterworth Press, 1980. pp.iii + 180. £6.95 Pbk.

This book contains a history of moral philosophy over the last one hundred years that is selective and narrowly focussed. It says nothing about moral philosophy in continental Europe. It treats of American writers only in so far as they have contributed to the two debates in British moral philosophy which are almost its sole topic.

One of these debates concerns the nature of moral judgements and expresses itself in questions like 'Do moral judgements state facts, or are they more expressions of taste?'. The second debate concerns the adequacy of utilitarianism as an account of how we distinguish between right and wrong actions. Dr Hudson is not unjustified in focussing on these two debates, in so far as they have provided the chief subject matter for British moral philosophy from the middle of the last century until recent years. So he is enabled to comment with characteristic lucidity on a succession of authors who have been important in shaping modern moral philosophy in this country.

In other respects the handling of these two debates gives me grounds for dissatisfaction. To begin with, one cannot feel absolutely confident about the way Hudson links them. He insinuates (especially in his use of the label 'intuitionism' in the last chapter) that those who are objectivists about moral judgements will be anti-utilitarians and those who are utilitarians will be anti-objectivists. This is also implicit in the parallel he draws connecting the debate between W. Whewell and J.S. Mill which opens the book and that between R.M. Hare and his critics which closes it. But it is not clear whether this link is inevitable, nor whether a 19th century utilitarian like Mill can be fitted into it. It seems to me to be very difficult to present utilitarianism as a serious answer to our moral dilemmas and at the same time to deny that its leading principles can properly be said to be true. This leads on to another worry: Hudson never really confronts

the oddity of abandoning the notion of truth in morality. His discussion of R.M. Hare's prescriptivism in Ch. 6 outlines difficulties, but fails to press home the real problem that without a notion of truth in morality, all moral opinions will be alike arbitrary. If the notion of truth is this important, then a good deal of British moral philosophy before and after the last War looks like an aberration. One thing is clear: if we are to give this notion some substance in moral thought, we shall have to go beyond the trivialities of intuitionism and reforge a connection between moral philosophy and metaphysics. The Idealist writers Bradley, Bosanquet and Green, whom Hudson rather dismisses on pp. 46-57, might then seem somewhat more important than their treatment in this book suggests.

Hudson, then, tends to take post-War moral philosophy on its own terms. This is shown in numerous ways, starting with the characterisation of moral philosophy as 'meta-ethics' on the second page of the Introduction. But many contemporary writers see the immediate past of the subject in our country as the depressing story of rather trivial debates on ill-thought-out issues. There is little in this book to indicate that such opinions have been forcefully expressed in recent years (students should see M. Warnock's book below and R. Wertheimer's difficult study *The Significance of Sense* Cornell U.P., 1972).

Histories of philosophy are usually good or bad according to the adequacy of the philosophical comment they contain. Before the student spends £7 on this one, I would recommend that he looks at a few other books that cover some of the same ground, in particular: A. MacIntyre *A Short History of Ethics*, Routledge, 1967; G.J. Warnock *Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, Macmillan, 1967; and M. Warnock *Ethics since 1900*, Oxford U.P., 1960.

Peter Byrne

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Peter Byrne

A CENTURY OF PROTESTANT THEOLOGY
by Alasdair I.C. Heron. Lutterworth Press, 1980.
ix 229pp. £6.95.

Despite the bewildering many-sidedness of recent theology, there are few guides for those who are perplexed by it. This book will improve matters, for it achieves the nearly impossible in showing in brief compass the main people, questions and trends that have dominated the Christian intellectual scene over the last century or so. Two things are shown with accuracy and clarity, and with touches of irony and wit which reveal unobtrusively the author's own view of the developments. The first is the way in which cultural and intellectual trends stemming from the Enlightenment dominate the various developments. The second, and more impressive, is that although much contemporary theology may appear to be the reaction of weakness, even panic, in the face of Christian institutional decline, the overall picture is of an astonishing variety of intellectual creativity. If Christianity in the West is due for a revival, it will owe something to the talents of those theologians of real ability and sometimes genius who have devoted themselves to the discipline—and devoted themselves despite its apparent lack of respectability in the modern world.

Some criticisms need to be made of the book's balance and detail, but they are few. Two are worth mentioning because they concern the giants of the nineteenth century and the way they have affected later theology. Recent scholarship has suggested that the doctrine of the Trinity is more important for Schleiermacher than Dr Heron allows, while his account of Hegel in this book wrongly calls him an 'absolute idealist'. It is true that the contemporary loss of the trinitarian centre of theology and the decline of the theology into idealism *do* owe much to Schleiermacher and Hegel. But they must be given the credit for being far greater and more comprehensive minds than their colourless successors.

But the review must end with praise for the overall comprehensiveness of the book, and for some memorable dicta, with one of which we must close. It is easy to be impatient, sometimes, with political and liberation theologies, especially in their more fashionable and over-

simplified manifestations. But, as Dr Heron reminds us at the end of his treatment of them, we should do well to remember that in Christian theology we have to do with 'the gospel of the Christ who was not crucified on an altar between two candles, but on Golgotha between two thieves.'

Colin Gunton

Simone Weil LECTURE ON PHILOSOPHY
trans. H. Price, introduced by Peter Winch.
C.U.P., 1978. £8.95.

Simone Weil was a remarkable Frenchwoman, known as much to the general public for the manner of her death encouraged by her own self-sacrifice, as for her philosophical and religious writings. Gradually the latter have become available in good translations, and here at last we can see something of the 'hard and systematic philosophical thinking out of which grew the characteristic ideas of her later writings which have justly attracted so much attention'.

These lectures, or rather lecture notes, are in themselves quite remarkable, for they are as taken down by one of Simone Weil's *lycee pupils in 1933-4*.

pupils in 1933-4. If ever the French system of teaching philosophy in schools were in need of vindication, the evidence lies here.

The introduction by Peter Winch, Professor of Philosophy at KCL is exceptionally good. He helps English-speaking readers to enter into the arguments taking place in these lectures, by a series of comparisons with the issues being discussed at that same time (1933-4), and later, by Wittgenstein.

The main sections of the book assemble the various notes under the general topics of Materialism, the philosophy of mind, politics and social theory, and Ethics and Aesthetics. The final section consists of a series of notes on a wide variety of topics ranging from 'the love of truth', through 'time', to 'justice and charity'.

The book is firmly and unapologetically a work of philosophy, but there is much in it that foreshadows and helps to clarify the depths of

religious insight which characterize the Simone Weil of 'Waiting on God', and 'Science, Necessity and the Love of God'. For example her respective treatments of the will (pp.203-4) and of the notion of Attention (pp.205-6) which are included amongst the outlines of prospective essay topics towards the end of the book, are full of suggestions and insights. In her subsequent development she came to regard the concept of attention, the total absorption in the presence of the other, as the key to both truth and goodness. For example in the later *Need for Roots*, she developed a concept of obligation as defined by the *needs* of others. (Much different from the current fascination with the now almost empty notion of the *rights* of others). The needs of others, however, are only revealed to those who attend without any distraction to the situation of others. In comparable fashion, she believed that science, properly so called, can only develop, where attention to nature is its basis. Where this is practised,

"The mind does not choose the thoughts it wants to have, but shuts out the thoughts it wants to shut out." (p.205)

Only by so-doing is the mind then open to the way things are, and to be open in this way is not to be engaged in imposing patterns upon the way things are.

Stewart R. Sutherland

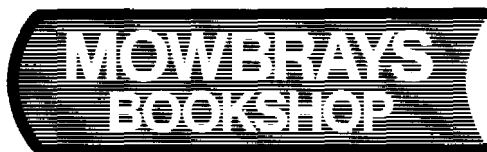
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE HUMAN MIND by E.L. Mascall. SPCK, 1975 pp., stiffened cover, £3.95.

Twenty years or so ago I had written at the close of a review of one of Dr Mascall's more determinedly scholastic works, 'This really will not do'. C.S. Dessain, the Oratorian censor, refused to allow the phrase. 'You can't say that about a man of Dr Mascall's distinction'. Well, I am now to review another work of Dr Mascall, and, with no censor to hinder me, what do I want to say?

Dr Mascall opens his present collection of essays with a 'defence of the intellectual principle'. The mind, '*mens, intellectus, Geist, or spirit*', complex and mysterious, is 'a very special kind of spirit, whose normal situation is to be involved with a material body', and, despite Descartes' *malin genie*, Hume's extreme 'mentalism', Kant's 'intimidatingly elaborate transcendental method', the 'heroic paradox' of British empiricists, 'the endemic vice of the Victorian theoretical physicist', and 'the brief and tragic career of the Vienna Circle', Dr Mascall is happy to declare still that 'the human mind can actually apprehend external reality'. Those who wonder that it matters whether we apprehend reality or an unfailingly consistent mirage have not yet experienced the human thirst for Truth.

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The recognition of that Truth which children are taught to tell, 'and even liars hope they will be thought to be telling', differentiates man from the brutes. And, Dr Mascall suggests, it is a liveliest exercise of mind which allows us to appreciate the mysterious 'union of manhood with God in the Incarnate Son'. His essay on Chalcedonian orthodoxy reaches to the affirmation that 'it is the literal assumption of a complete human nature by an unchanged Son of God that makes Christology genuinely intelligible, while the various deviant attempts, from Apollinarius onwards, to produce a more easily acceptable figure by minimising one or other of the terms inevitably end up in increased obscurity and reduced efficacy'. Christology may, perhaps, rejoice in the luminosity of Chalcedon, but what of soteriology? 'The eternal Word's investiture of himself with manhood in the womb of Mary produced not just a transitory repercussion throughout the human race but a real and permanent change in humanity itself'. Such sartorian language clumps Dr Mascall nicely with Luther and Therese of Lisieux, and he may welcome this as another sign of that unity of mankind 'which cannot be adequately systematized in the terms of any secular thought system', but which, in its theological express, may yet contribute to our sociology and our political understanding. And to that of those South American liberationists whose Christology is open to serious theological criticism, 'unless it receives and responds to this criticism its future as a movement of *Christian* renewal seems extremely hazardous'. There is a nice turning of tables with that sentence. It is, at any rate, Dr Mascall's belief that the formula of Chalcedon 'may have greater possibilities of achievement awaiting it in our modern age'. Dr Mascall is here led first to write a four-page piece expanding a previous paragraph on the shroud in Turin, and last to consider 'sexuality and God'. I am not to be interested in that shroud which, with or against all evidence, I take to be a cere-cloth that covered some liturgically reposed figure of the sepulchred Christ. Dr Mascall's final topic is a shade more exciting: he passes from some pages about our sex-chromosomes, through a demonstration that the Second Person of the Trinity is 'intrinsically

male', and, further, Persons being differentiated by relations and not by properties, 'can we say that the Second Person is intrinsically male without attributing maleness to the other two?', to the ingenious declaration, with Pere Bouyer, that 'there is a real sense in which men are inferior to women, in that a man can exercise fatherhood only, as it were by proxy, since unqualified fatherhood is the prerogative of the Father in heaven, while a woman can exercise motherhood, as it were, in her own right', and the happy conclusion that 'the actual mechanism of conception and gestation confirms this'. Will this do? Whether it will or not, it is all presented as prefatory to a consideration of the presbyteral ordination of women. Dr Mascall does not provide an extended discussion of this matter but it is more than a fair guess that he has concluded against such ordainings. I am at a disadvantage in assessing these prolegomena since it has long seemed to me that Christians should not be talking of how to facilitate the ordination of women but of how to prevent the ordination of men.

Between Chalcedon and chromosome Dr Mascall sets a re-working of his 'Journal of Theological Studies' review of the late Professor Lampe's 1976 Bampton Lectures, *God as Spirit*. These were, like a great deal else of modern Christology, 'inspired by a mainly unconfessed and certainly uncriticized mixture of unitarianism and adoptionism'. Dr Mascall is not at all surprised 'that these two heresies (for that is how Christian tradition in both East and West would describe them) should go together', but he is a little surprised that an Anglican clergyman, and a Regius Professor to boot, should be so little careful to conceal his heresies. Dr Mascall's surprise is, by the way, doubled at his reading a recent essay by Professor Wiles. Admitting that he is 'in no position to question Dr Lampe's knowledge of the New Testament and of the early Fathers', Dr Mascall does question the interpretation Lampe offered of the patristic enterprise, particularly his view that talk of God the Son 'almost inevitably tends to suggest either that deity revealed in human terms is somehow other than God whom we conceive of as Father, or that God whom we acknowledge in Jesus was united in him with something less than a fully human personality'.

Lampe's soteriology can happily accommodate the cry 'Jesus saves', but he thinks it 'not enough' thence to conclude 'Jesus is God'. Dr Mascall hints darkly at 'some evasiveness and ambiguity' in that 'not enough', and sees plainly that, though occasional inconsistencies exhibit his 'earlier and more scriptural faith', Lampe in 1976 'did not believe that Jesus is God'. It is rather a pity that Dr Mascall does not think it a necessary justice to quote Lampe's affirmation of what Bampton's directives meant for him: 'I believe in the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the sense that the one God, the Creator and Saviour Spirit, revealed himself and acted decisively for us in Jesus'. Clearly there will be some to complain that such a formulation does not satisfy the demands of traditional Christology, especially when Lampe is so unconcerned with talk of pre-existence or resurrection. But clearly, also, some will complain, as Lampe himself remarked, 'that I have been more conservative than the present state of critical, historical, sociological, and religious studies warrants, particularly in my emphasis on the centrality and decisiveness of the action of God in Jesus'. It is less important that a theologian should manage old words like 'adoptionist', or new words like that 'model' to which Dr Mascall so repetitively objects, than that he should, with sensitivity and intelligence, elucidate the demands of Truth in his experience. Dr Mascall, in undertaking the duty of indicating heresy, does not, of course, share Gwendolen Fairfax' positive pleasure in speaking her mind. He writes in the lively assurance that conciliar orthodoxy offers us an enriching language for the future. That orthodox language has indeed seemed to many Christians, to most at some periods, the happiest for their experience. That is what, in historical terms, 'orthodoxy' means. But no one sensible of the wonder of divine revelation, certainly not Dr Mascall, would wish us to suppose that the propositions of established orthodoxy are the eschatological word. An essay in this very volume is, after all, entitled 'On from Chalcedon'. As that title suggests, Dr Mascall thinks it only proper to begin our meditations from the achieved positions of orthodoxy. But it does not seem impossible that, at another period, Christians may think the language of John

Bampton or of the Fathers of Nicaea offers a less vital expression of the divine than the language of the sometime heterodox. Geoffrey Lampe was so manifestly obedient in his vocation to speak of God according to the demands of his experience, that hearing his work described in terms of 'heresy' is less painful than the recognition that Dr Mascall is content to employ such terms.

He is content, also, to remark dispiritingly that, in the discipline of theology, 'outings, however, are outings and work is work, and it is very important not to confuse them with each other'. He said this first in that other book, twenty years ago, and it still won't do.

Hamish F.G. Swanston

TAKING LEAVE OF GOD by Don Cupitt.
London, SCM Press Ltd. 1980. Pp. xiii + 174.
£4.95.

Within what limits and on what principles may Christian doctrine develop and still retain its identity? This has a very good claim to be the most pressing and perplexing theological question of our day, and Don Cupitt's book makes a major contribution to its consideration. In his characteristically direct and candid way, he forces the issue by presenting it in an uncompromising form. For, on the face of it, what could be a more daring and suicidal development for Christian doctrine than the abandonment of belief in God's objective (or in Cupitt's term, 'realistic') existence? So the book is liable to be dismissed by the faithful without being read: clearly the man has gone outside the bounds of recognizably Christian conviction. Dismissed too by the unbelieving. a leading theologian has come to see sense at last.

But if they do that, both will be making a serious mistake. For on every page, they may see the deepest religious beliefs explored, understood and endorsed. Then, they will find themselves invited to follow up with great honesty the implications of those beliefs. Thus: how is that disinterested integrity, which every religious person knows to be the heart of true spirituality, to be reconciled with our being over against any conceivable objective deity? Does not his existence make nonsense of our

genuinely moral freedom and our truly free decision to commit ourselves to the 'new life' which is the religious way? Are not the theological arguments alleged to support the existence of God well short of effective, and can any arguments reasonably tie together a beneficent God and the monstrously evil world of his creating?

So no God, only spiritual values and 'the religious requirement'. It sounds an austere recipe for living and hardly has the makings of religious revival (but then, what has?). But it is recommended as the truly disinterested way--and so as the route to joy. Religion belongs inside us; it is our response to reality, and the best response of all; and we can achieve, by devout attentiveness, the death of self which will inevitably bring that joy. Christian doctrines and liturgies, with their symbolic, picturesque presentation of the insights of religion, will help us--but only so long as we do not objectify them or fight for them as descriptive truths. They are our heritage, if we are in the Christian tradition, and, in historical terms, all that is being recommended is the next logical development of that tradition. This is the turn which, in our western scientific culture, it must now take to stay alive and vigorous (and, alas, it shows so many signs of accepting the death-warrant of mere traditionalism).

Cupitt claims distinguished predecessors. The truly religious have always known these things in their bones: the prophets, Jesus of course, St John of the Cross, Kierkegaard and Meister Eckhart who gave the book its title. So implicitly he raises the question: what is this business of knowing in the bones what the lips would undoubtedly deny? When I give my exegesis of Jesus or Kierkegaard, what is the force of my claim that when X was said, what was really meant was (the to me more meaningful) Y? We all interpret others in this way, but with what safeguards may we do it? Cupitt also claims contemporaries: the theologically unspoiled believer has already in his heart reached something like the position taken here. It is a claim of considerable pastoral significance, and, if admitted, might lead the clergy either to redouble their orthodox efforts or to ponder anew where faith really lies.

But has Cupitt satisfactorily relegated the

objective God to the realm of myth in the interests of true religion? God has after all survived numerous attempts in the past hundred years to spread the rumour of his death. Will he now lie down quietly at last?

What Cupitt has done is to show how little the western God of the philosophers has to do with true religion. Proving or disproving his existence never seemed to say very much to anyone concerned with religious commitment. But in commending the alternative of the purely interior, subjective God ('the religious requirement'), utterly demanding though he is (for this is not at all the subjectivism of sloppy self-pleasing), he has fallen into a trap which has bedevilled much Christian talk about God, classically in the dispute between Augustine and Pelagius.

How shall we model the relations between God and man? Are they to be seen as essentially disjunctive or conjunctive? That is, is the image to be that of master to servant, king to subject, teacher to pupil, wherein man can retain his independence and freedom only by steering clear, finding a corner of his own to retire to? Or is it to be that of lover to beloved, friend to friend, wherein attraction, trust and mutual involvement are the very conditions of freedom and new life? If it is to be the former, clearly all the problems of heteronomy which Cupitt so well identifies, enter in and are insoluble, once man finds himself determined to be autonomous. We moderns decide on our own authorities, everything impels us to do so, and God himself, we now feel, would not have it otherwise; so the master-God, who inevitably threatens our freedom, must go--he cannot be true and I cannot believe in him. So Cupitt. And the case has force.

But what of the lover-God? Will he not survive, and with all the greater vigour for being disentangled from the master-God with whom he has been so long confused? Just as Augustine would have done well to stick to that lover-God and follow up relentlessly the implications of belief in him (for he made his case outrageous morally only when he deserted him for the master-God), so Cupitt might have seen how things looked when the lover-God takes the field. May not that God (and was he not the God of St John of the Cross at least

among Cupitt's heroes?) master us and in the very act re-make us, be cruel to us and yet retain our love, bring authority and liberation into a paradoxical harmony which shatters all analogies but that of love itself? In his reality I can rejoice, retaining integrity, freedom and true religion. But Cupitt is right, no other God is worth believing in at all. No other analogy can do the work required.

For present credibility, much depends on two things: first, whether the cruelty of love is an analogy which can carry force. From Job and Paul onwards, we have long experience to draw on. And second, whether the disinterestedness which is a vital aspect of the deepest love, must properly extend to persisting in allegiance to God as if he were not there. But I suspect Cupitt will not persuade us all that religion can stand if no lover is there at all.

J.L. Houlden

ST FRANCIS AND THE SONG OF BROTHERHOOD by Eric Doyle OFM. Published by George Allen & Unwin 1980, 207 pp. (no price given)

In these pessimistic and problematical times any book which can enlarge our vision and renew our hopes is doubly welcome. Fr Doyle's book is one of these.

It draws on the life of St Francis of Assisi and on his *Canticle of Brother Sun* to remind us of how important it is for men to live in a harmonious relationship with the created order, with its Creator and their own inner selves. To Fr Doyle it is clear that recovery of hope depends on right decisions with regard to the ecological crisis and our standard of living, since these are proportionately related.

But how to make right decisions? Here he points to Francis' approach which includes "an awareness of the basic unity of reality, a sense of wonder and mystery, and a recognition of the fraternal character of creation" (p.5).

Now more than ever, says Fr Doyle, it is time for Christians to show that they really love the world, value it, take it seriously in itself and not just "consider it the backdrop to being tested for worthiness to enter heaven"

(p.62). Particularly thought-provoking here is the challenging agenda for theologians that Fr Doyle draws up on pp. 70-71, about the need for what might be called a theology of the environment.

Among the tasks that he calls on theologians to undertake is the formulation of "a theology of creation which includes aesthetic categories in its essential structure". Furthermore, "the religious roots of the ecological crisis are tied up as much with our idea of God as they are with our concept of nature. This will involve Christian theology in a much more serious and intensive dialogue with Hinduism and the philosophies of India." (p.70)

Inter alia Eric Doyle gives a fresh and compelling look at the life of Francis. But surely it is inadequate to say that Francis did not criticise either Church or State? (p.16). Implicit criticism can be found in Francis' life at several points. A 19th century biographer, Paul Sabatier, reminds us that in Assisi as in almost every Italian town there were the established rich and the powerless poor, *populo grasso* and *populo minuto*, and, says Sabatier, Francis "resolutely placed himself among the latter. This political side of his apostolate needs to be clearly apprehended if we would understand its amazing success . . ."

However, my main worry about Fr Doyle's book is that its cover and title will mislead people into thinking it is a study in arcane Franciscanism and of interest to lovers of St Francis only. In fact it speaks to the social, political and economic conditions of our times. And part of its charm is the width (and depth) of the reading that has gone into it. Who else but Fr Doyle could quote in the same book from *The Wind in the Willows*, the French Marxist Roger Garaudy, Schumacher, Jung, von Rad, de Chardin, John XXIII and D.H. Lawrence?

Terry Cyprian SSF

S.W. Sykes (ed.): *KARL BARTH—STUDIES OF HIS THEOLOGICAL METHOD*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979, 204 pages. £10.00.

The book may be a mere 200 pages but it represents the distillation of a massive amount of critical reading by four contemporary British theologians. They are S.W. Sykes of the University of Durham; D.F. Ford of the University of Birmingham; R.H. Roberts also of the University of Durham; and R.D. Williams of Westcott House, Cambridge. Besides the four essays by these writers there is also an introduction on The Study of Barth by Sykes, and a 'Conclusion: Assessing Barth', by Ford.

The book is not designed to be, nor would it be suitable as an introduction to Barth's theology. On the whole the book is for those who have already grappled with Barth for themselves. The writers do not line themselves up with Barth, but they do make a serious attempt to understand and evaluate his work. However, they cannot be read uncritically because inevitably they bring their own preferences and presuppositions to bear on their interpretation. Thus, for example, each of the writers wishes to preserve some form of 'natural theology', and as a result they all come to fairly predictable objections to Barth.

There is a real difficulty in theological debate when premises are not agreed. And when these are not agreed any benefits flowing from the debate tend to be selective. What is not valid is the attack on conclusions that Barth draws when these are fully consistent with the premises he has explicitly laid down.

The last two sentences in the book, written by Ford, are important in this connection:

So it is perhaps his latest work that shows Barth at his best, summing up the main elements in his thinking and replying to well-informed critics. Yet he recants practically nothing, and leaves his *magnum opus* standing like a massive, unfinished, but formally simple and consistent sculpture—a spiral round and round the self-expression of God in time (p.201).

Barth would concur with that last phrase. That self-expression took place in Jesus Christ, and for that reason Barth spoke of Christology as 'the touchstone of all knowledge of God in the

Christian sense', and quotes, 'Tell me how it stands with your Christology, and I shall tell you who you are' (*Dogmatics in Outline*, SCM p.66). Williams is aware of what is involved here, and concludes his essay with these words. 'If we object to a Barthian Trinitarian or Christological model and its implications for the doctrines of man and grace, we are obliged to examine the roots and norms of our own understanding... (p.192).

Another book appearing at about the same time as the one under review was Geoffrey Bromiley's *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*. While its contents are essentially an excellent summary of the Church Dogmatics, it also contains important and very perceptive criticisms at certain points. These criticisms are telling and valid for the reason that Bromiley shares Barth's Christological and Biblical premises. Thus he will criticise Barth's use of the Bible in relation, for example, to universalism, Judas and demonology.

While these four writers set out to work through Barth—and not round him, or even against him—they do not appear to have taken adequate account of the principle that if we cannot share his assumptions we ought not to expect to share his conclusions. A theological debate with Barth is a little frustrating because his death closed the 'canon' of his writings in a way that he never wished to. To him, theological work should be seen as a starter, a finger pointing towards Jesus. It is not without significance that he always had in front of him in his study Grünewald's picture of the crucifixion.

The introductory essay by Sykes on 'The Study of Barth' is a useful summary of the principal literature about Barth, and it outlines a range of opinions expressed, for example, by H.R. Mackintosh, the Baillies, T.F. Torrance and Alan Richardson. The conclusion of the essay is important 'It is, we believe... by working through Barth and not by going round him that a pathway exists to constructive contemporary theological endeavour; working through him, moreover, in a direction in which he endeavoured to point' (p.16). It is important to bear this chosen perspective in mind in reading the essays, and to judge for ourselves after reading them whether it has been consistently kept in view.

The first essay on Barth's theological method is one by S.W. Sykes: 'Barth on the Centre of Theology'. His approach is positive and is clearly stated: 'In this essay Barth's fundamental theological method is being taken at face value, placed in context, analysed, and criticised as though Barth himself had identified this method with complete accuracy' (p.17). Barth speaks often of a centre to theology and it is this that leads Sykes to raise the theme. He shows first that the New Testament treats various things as 'fundamental' in a variety of contexts. He then looks for the concept of a centre to theology in the works of Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin. Without lingering over his analyses, which are of necessity very compact, he arrives at the method common to both Calvin and Melancthon of selecting certain *loci*, and dealing with them independently. It is a method that Barth is shown to endorse strongly as 'the only truly scholarly method in dogmatics'. The conclusion to this investigation is that while there is a centre to Barth's theology, there is no central *doctrine*, concept or idea, and this indicates why Barth resisted so strongly the whole concept of seeking the 'essence of Christianity'. In Calvin we see an emphasis that is fundamental to Barth's epistemology, when he spoke of faith as a 'firm and sure knowledge of God's benevolence to us... revealed to our minds by the Holy Spirit' (p.26). This is what Torrance refers to as 'the epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit', our real knowledge of God comes through God himself.

Sykes then proceeds to outline the development of the central elements in Barth's theology by way of a summary of his debate with Harnack and his life-long encounter with Schleiermacher.

At first sight Harnack and Barth would appear to be saying the same thing: namely, that Jesus Christ is at the centre of Christianity. But it soon begins to emerge that they mean very different things. To Harnack, Jesus is the great teacher and example. To Barth, he is God Incarnate. To the former it is the historical Jesus; to the latter it is the risen Christ. And the knowledge of Jesus Christ for Barth is not by way of Harnack's historical studies but through a God-awakened faith.

At first sight Schleiermacher and Barth

would appear to be saying opposite things, and for this reason some might be puzzled as to why Barth kept returning to him throughout his life. It seems on the surface that Schleiermacher is placing man and his subjective 'feeling experiences' at the centre of theology, while Barth is placing God and his revelation there. But Sykes shows how that the centre in Schleiermacher is not as simple as that, in that a secondary motif is always present: the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. For this reason Barth seemed to feel that there was a real possibility in Schleiermacher of a theology centred in the Holy Spirit.

For Barth there is a real centre, which is different from a systematic centre, and that is God's act of atonement in Jesus Christ. Sykes will contend that this does in fact come very close to having a Christology, Barth's own, as the centre. In arguing this he takes issue with Barth's choice of John 1:14 as the key statement on Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and suggests that there are many other statements (e.g. Acts 2.22) that could equally legitimately be chosen. It is doubtful whether Sykes has a point here. The reason why Barth selects John 1:14 is not that it accords with his own Christology, but that it seems to encapsulate very succinctly the general teaching of the New Testament about Christ.

Arising from this line of argument Sykes makes a plea for a plurality of theological systems which 'would emerge slowly... under the safeguard of the prayer of the church'. Here Sykes suggests that in a tradition where preaching is dominant, changes in theological thinking can disperse through the church very rapidly. In a church where the liturgy is dominant, changes take place very slowly. This he regards as a safe-guard. On the other hand, the safeguard of the Biblical criterion that Barth would propose, regulated constantly by prayer would seem to be preferable on the grounds that theology always progresses by way of dialogue within the church anyway.

Sykes concludes his essay with the statement that he seeks two adjustments in Barth's theological method, one radical and the other minor.

The radical adjustment relates to Barth's epistemology. Sykes has shown that any and every Christology has its own corresponding

epistemology. Post-Enlightenment theology, for example, made man the measure of all things, the knowledge of God included. Yet the noetic necessity on which Barth would insist is that God can only be known through God and God's act of revelation.

Yet is an 'adjustment' to Barth's epistemology possible at this point? For Barth, God is the source and ground of all human rationality, and we can only think and respond as rational beings because God has addressed us. Because God can only be known through God, the Incarnation can only be understood in terms of this necessity. No mere 'adjustment' is possible here, since the only alternative is to hold that man *does* have an independent capacity to know God. Barth had to say 'Nein' to that. Sykes asks why different scholars studying the same New Testament documents nevertheless arrive at different Christologies—witness, for example, Schleiermacher, Harnack and Barth. This is undoubtedly a subjective matter, in that we tend to hear what we are predisposed to hear. And yet does God not sometimes break through our predispositions with a fresh disclosure of himself? Isn't that exactly what happened to Barth as he was sitting under the apple tree in Safenwil, reading the letter to the Romans?

The argument nevertheless indicates precisely why it will never be possible to formulate a doctrine of Christ that would be universally acceptable as 'the centre' of Christian theology. And this is the merit of Barth's steadfast refusal to concede this point, even at the risk of being accused of keeping his own Christology at the centre. All Christians are agreed that at the heart of the Christian faith is God's act of atonement in Christ. The formulation and interpretation of that event follows, but the interpretation is always tentative and provisional. Barth offers his own interpretation, and he would not claim finality for himself and his views. Yet having said that, is Barth's Christology really all that unique, or different? This is an aspect of his theology that in fact commands the widest imaginable respect. Of course it is non-Docetic, non-Ebionite, non-Arian, but is that not widely true in the church today? Sykes himself does not quarrel with Barth's christology. The problem may be that Barth is disturbing because

he takes his Christology too seriously, too far. Christ is too sufficient.

And yet, in view of the Pauline Christology, especially in Colossians and Ephesians, is it actually possible to take our Christology too far? If Christ really is 'all and in all', then our striving after an autonomous corner in the created order is misguided and irrelevant. In view of this, the 'minor adjustment' that Sykes asks for—that we should realistically accept a doctrinal centre to theology—ceases to be very important.

The next essay is by D.F. Ford of the University of Birmingham, under the title, 'Barth's Interpretation of the Bible'. Ford makes a valid claim for his essay when at the beginning he says of it: 'It does have the advantage of engaging Barth over the one documentary authority which he accepted as a primary source and criterion of theology' (p.56). This is also the reason why it is a satisfying essay and has the feel of fairness about it. It is also the reason why Ford's critical questions have substantial force.

His main argument is that the actual practical way in which Barth uses Scripture is of greater value in understanding his hermeneutics than his Doctrine of the Word of God in Volume 1. What this implies is that God can only be investigated and to that extent understood in the light of his actions. These are described in the biblical stories, which disclose God and this gives to them an 'all-embracing world of meaning' (p.62). 'What Barth offers in his doctrine of God can be seen . . . as a thorough-going attempt to understand the eternal God through a temporal history' (p.63). 'God's acts are the context in which all other events are understood' (p.64). As a result there can be no fear that God might have any side to his nature which conflicts with what can be seen in Jesus Christ. The reason why such absolute significance can be given to Jesus Christ is the resurrection. It is the pivotal character of the crucifixion and resurrection for our understanding of God that makes any natural theology irrelevant, and indeed, false.

Ford then proceeds to illustrate how Barth uses the biblical narratives as the basis for his doctrines of God, creation and reconciliation.

Central to Barth's doctrine of God is the doctrine of election, inasmuch as in election Jesus Christ is held to be identified with the God who elects and rejects, and simultaneously with men who are elected or rejected by God. In other words 'God has disclosed himself fully and frankly in Jesus Christ'. Barth's method is then to trace, through the medium of the bible stories, the interweaving of good and evil which is finally defined in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Ford will argue, and here he will have Bromiley's support, that the implications of this interpretation are pushed to their limit in Barth's application of them to Judas (p.66).

Ford then turns to the doctrine of creation in which he shows that Barth is far more concerned with the God who is revealed in the sagas than any question of their scientific or historical accuracy. In our attempt to understand them Ford recalls Barth's appeal for 'imagination'—which is often so 'chronically lacking' in the 'middle class habit of the Western mind' (p.69). However, the meaning of creation also is only fully understood through Jesus Christ, through whom the 'beginning' of all things is relocated firmly in God's will.

In the doctrine of reconciliation Ford turns to Barth's treatment of the gospel stories. For Barth their historical factuality is of fundamental importance. It is important that this turning of God to us men happened 'in this way', and 'is not simply imagined and presented as a true teaching of pious and thoughtful people' (p.70). With regard to the stories of the crucifixion and resurrection, Ford shows that Barth acknowledges that the resurrection cannot be historically demonstrated in the normal way. There is only one way in which that resurrection can be verified, and that is by the simple referent that Jesus Christ is alive now. It is the resurrection that takes the gospel stories out of the realm of novels and fictional short stories. This resurrected man, 'participating in and uniting time and eternity' is our only guide to the relationship between the two.

Ford is correct when he declares. 'We are here facing the fundamental challenge of Barth's theology, his assertion that there is this extraordinary reality, the risen Christ, whose presence is endlessly rich and fruitful for understanding, and for all of life' (p.84).

Having acknowledged all this Ford nevertheless enters a plea for a certain recognition of a natural theology, asking whether Barth has not too dogmatically limited God's freedom to speak in various ways. One is sympathetic to the problem, and yet Barth has been wise in this matter too. He does not limit God's ability and freedom to speak in other ways. What he does question is our ability to discern what God is saying. We only know *who* it is that is speaking in creation through the Revealed Word. Paul in Romans chapter one is quite clear about what men do when they think they have found God in nature, and when they think they have heard him speaking to them through natural phenomena.

Ford asks whether Jesus Christ is not overloaded by this theology, and especially questions the idea that Christ's resurrection encompasses all history. However, the question we have to ask is whether Ford or Barth is correct in the understanding of the biblical data. What does Paul mean when he says, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive'? Or again, 'Because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead...'? Or all those passages in Ephesians and Colossians?

The challenge of history after the resurrection is surely the challenge of faithful obedience to the living Christ. Man's striving after an autonomous history, independent of God, in which he will achieve his own self-authentication is, in biblical terms, impossible. And, one feels that Ford is sensitive to this, for he ends with an imaginary question from Barth: 'Might it not be that one event, one person, is so astonishingly rich that the significance of all subsequent history might consist in becoming more and more thankful for it in thought, speech and action?' (p.87).

It is the essay on 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Time', by R.H. Roberts, that raises the most questions. He seems to adopt an open attitude when he says at the end of the essay that 'to accept or reject Barth would be merely to succumb to the demands of his own theological error' (p.146). But then he adds, 'His work lies before us, the stricken, glorious hulk of some great Dreadnought...', a sentence that hardly commends itself as a neutral metaphor. Roberts does in fact reject Barth because he repudiates

everything that is essential to Barth's theology.

Roberts's meaning is frequently not helped by a degree of opacity of language and style. The intention finally becomes apparent, but the process of reaching it is tortuous. Consider this sentence that occurs in the first paragraph: "The so-called "inner logic" of the Church Dogmatics is the axis of eternity and time unfolded through the motif of the "analogy of faith" (p.88). An 'axis' being 'unfolded' through a 'motif' is difficult to conceptualize. Or this one: 'In what follows the doctrine of time Barth provides has both function theologically and also to provide a concrete account of time as it is experienced and understood outside the purlieu of theology' (p.104). Is a line missing? Or a word? Or where do we put the commas? Or this one. 'So it is that the pattern of antecedence and consequence and the corresponding method of *analogia fidei* informing the Church Dogmatics take on an urgent importance in the context of the doctrine of time' (p.107). Or this sentence. 'This means that the vast and complex temporal system that emerges in the Church Dogmatics must never co-incide with non-theological categories in identity, only in the so-called 'dialectic of transcendence' (p.113). It might be too much to say that it is impossible to understand his meaning; but it is exceedingly difficult, and the essay abounds in further examples of tortured English. What is 'mutual actualism'? And in which English dictionary did he discover the word 'instantiation'? One might also observe in passing that for such an expensive hard-cover book of so few pages the number of typographical errors is excessive.

The problem with Roberts's essay is not that he misrepresents Barth. That he does not do. He knows and understands Barth thoroughly, but repudiates what is fundamental and essential to Barth's theology. He makes comments such as these. '... the doctrine of creation becomes deeply *enmeshed*' (my emphasis) 'in Christology...' (p.132); and 'Both creation and creature rest *under the shadow* of Christology' (p.133). (Again my emphasis). In contrast, those who follow Barth's Christological approach would say that 'creation is *opened up* by Christology', or derives its meaning from, and is *illuminated* by Christology; and that we *understand* humanity through Jesus Christ, the Real

Man. The emphasized words suggest a specific prejudice against Barth.

Barth does of course use complementary and contrasting expressions to bring out his meaning, and this is inevitable in theology, since God and man, time and eternity, life and death, good and evil, the seen and the unseen, etc. *are* polarities, and in a certain sense, antitheses. Yet it is precisely the joy of the good news that in Jesus Christ the whole of reality is preserved and only the 'impossible possibility' of evil is 'behind God's back', and is where he is not. To reject these complementarities as 'ambiguous', 'contradictory', and 'equivocation' is possible only if one rejects the wholeness of Jesus Christ.

What Barth has done is to begin quite simply with the historical origins of the Christian faith, in Jesus Christ, and, accepting the Biblical witness that he is the 'Word of God' made flesh, has proceeded to allow this accepted truth to throw light on the whole of reality. Barth's view is holistic, and this does not negate the natural and created. It simply places it where it belongs: within the mind and will of the Creator. The only danger of such a totally holistic view is that it might be inclined to include what God has actually excluded. It tends towards a universalism which Bromiley rightly criticises as going beyond the Biblical view—e.g. with regard to the demonic, or 'Judas', and all that he represents.

In arguing his case against Barth Roberts appears to force him to say what he does not say. Roberts draws a distinction between 'reality as the purveyor of revelation and all reality apart from revelation' (p.123), the latter being 'the texture of reality as normally experienced'. He then concludes: 'Nature as such becomes wholly problematic in the face of this revelation' (p.124). That conclusion does not follow. Jesus Christ is the reality through whom the revelation of God comes to mankind, but this does not in the least negate the historical, natural context in which that revelation takes place. As the 'theatre of his glory' creation is entirely real but is subordinate to God and not a reality alongside of him. Any reality that creation has is given it by the Creator, yet not in the Deistic sense. Rather the whole course of its history flows from this givenness. When Barth says 'Let God

be God', this is a faith that makes 'totalitarian demands'. If God really is God, then on the day when all theological ships are tested on the great sea of eternity, then one suspects that it will be Roberts's theology that will sink unnoticed like some unknown rowing boat in which he valiantly but hopelessly tried to rescue Barth from himself.

The essay by R.D. Williams, 'Barth on the Triune God', is the most difficult to summarise and comment on, because the essay is already tightly compressed in its 47 pages. The subject is present at every point in the 13 part volumes of the Church Dogmatics. The essay underlines the perennial problem that all our thinking about God must strain our intellectual capacities to their limits, and still remain incomplete because by definition the infinite God cannot be contained within even the greatest human minds. Williams is right when he observes, 'Trinitarian theology, in so far as it is concerned with the "kind" of God Christians worship, is far from being a luxury indulged in solely by remote and ineffectual dons; it is of cardinal importance for spirituality and liturgy, for ethics, for the whole of Christian self-understanding' (p.191). But we must also recognise that we will not complete the enquiry.

The essay by Williams should be read in conjunction with Jungel's excellent monograph, somewhat longer (107 pages), published by the Scottish Academic Press under the title *The Doctrine of the Trinity. God's Being is in Becoming* (Tubingen, 1964).

Williams shows that Barth constructs his Trinitarian theology from his analysis of God's act of revelation. The question at issue is 'Who is this self-revealing God?' Like the other writers, Williams recognises that Barth does not identify revelation with history, but rather with 'particularised interruptions of the worldly story'. But this opens up the problem of identifying which might be the 'revelatory events'. Williams sees difficulties here, and there is one—and Williams does not resolve it. Is there any infallible guide to selecting those historical events that reveal God? Or, on the other hand, if there is, how are they to be read and interpreted? And by whom?

Barth safeguards himself from arbitrariness by focussing his attention on those events which present the actuality of God's speaking and being heard, and especially on Easter, Good Friday, and Pentecost.

It is with Barth's understanding of the Holy Spirit that Williams raises the most significant questions. 'The relative clarity of the treatment of Father and Son is itself put in question by the apparent failure of the same method to produce an adequate theology of the Spirit' (p.171). He argues that the model Barth chooses requires that in the Spirit God reveals himself to himself—something 'distinctly odd'. He suggests that the 'revelation model' for arriving at a doctrine of the Trinity in fact breaks down at this point, and Barth moves from an emphasis on revelation to one of communion. The difficulty seems to be exaggerated, however. Barth speaks of the Spirit as 'the subjective possibility of revelation', enabling us to grasp the revelation that we see in Christ. There does not seem to be any real objection to God being both object and subject in this way. It is comparable with the concept of the Spirit being the acting subject in our worship of God ('They that worship him must worship him in Spirit').

In pursuing his objection to the central place that Barth gives to revelation in his theology, Williams takes up the criticism that Wingren makes of Barth in his little book *Theology in Conflict* (1958). Wingren argues strongly that Barth's emphasis is all in the realm of knowledge—that man's problem is a lack of knowledge, and he will be saved by having that deficiency rectified. Yet this has always seemed to me to be a weak argument, for revelation is not a mere impartation of information but an interpretation of God's mighty acts. It is to overlook the vitality of Barth's understanding of Act and Being, in Jesus Christ, and the relationship between Word and Act.

As he comes to his conclusion Williams asks, 'What is wrong with Barth?' He suggests 'a certain lack of concern with human growth, human diversity, and human freedom of response . . .' He suggests that a 'glib Barthian defence' would say that these are not the primary interest of theology. I am not interested in a Barthian defence, but would suggest that Barth is very close to the God who seized hold

of Paul on the Damascus road, and the Christ who commanded 'Follow me', and the Spirit who 'came mightily' on the prophets and apostles. I do not find the 'lack of concern' to which Williams refers. To be grasped by God's revelation is to be involved in the world for him, and Barth's protest, for example, against National Socialism was completely of a piece with his theology.

In the Conclusion Ford makes some suggestions about reading Barth. I would conclude with a slightly different suggestion, although agreeing in general with what Ford proposes. The best compact introduction to Barth's thinking must be his *Dogmatics in Outline*. A reading and re-reading of that before attempting anything else will create the correct frame of reference within which all else can be fitted. I would suggest next Bromiley's *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, because unlike

other introductions it deals with the actual substance of the *Church Dogmatics*. Then Volume IV part 1, paragraphs 57 and 58, and so on! But parallel to this Volume III in all its parts deals with many of the issues raised by these four writers.

The important service rendered by these writers is to remind us that, regardless of our own preferences and preconceived theological notions, Barth is well worth reading, and indeed cannot be ignored. To do this would be to pretend that the mountain in the front garden is not there. He demands attention, and these four men gave eighteen months to a sustained engagement with the *Church Dogmatics*. This alone would be sufficient testimony to their estimate of Barth's importance.

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