

The understanding of this social dimension is not absent from Bishop Butler's book. Delivered to a mixed audience while still a Benedictine abbot, the lectures, published here in an expanded form, seek to present the important insights of the diffuse and even contradictory documents of the Vatican Council to all who are interested. His presentation is notable for breadth and depth. Starting from the document on Divine Revelation, which he rightly describes as one of the most important of the Council's decrees, he deals with the significance of Tradition; of the primacy of the sacramental presence of Christ in his Church over its juridical structures; of the consequent difficulty in setting limits to the Church, and the altered attitude to Ecumenism which follows from this difficulty; and he ends with a fine chapter on the altered perspective of modern theology entitled 'Objective and Subjective'. It is from the conception of the Church as the people of God that he develops an approach to the sacraments which make sense of their sign character as part of the language of this special people—a valuable complement to Fr Fransen's approach.

The absence of any mention of the changed attitude to atheism is a minor matter, though the subject could well have figured in the discussion on the primacy of conscience in the declaration of religious freedom. More serious is the failure to point out the altered attitude to the world implied in the holiness of the whole

people of God and the placing of the chapter on religious. Surely the reason why this latter chapter is so unsatisfactory, as the bishop admits, is that this insight has not been taken seriously in our thinking about the religious life? Nevertheless the book can unreservedly be recommended for what it does say both on the council documents and on theology in general—the bishop's insights are always worthy of careful attention, while the book should prove especially helpful to all who want a short guide to the council documents.

Finally it is worth remarking that both books operate solely within the closed field of Roman Catholic theology and Church discipline. In this they are by no means unusual, but the consequences become evident in Bishop Butler's treatment of the Church as sacrament. He accepts the Council's traditional terms: The Church is a sign to the nations, and does not seem to sense that in the realms of ecumenism (which began in modern times after the First World War with Söderblom), religious freedom and the primacy of conscience, the 'sign' can only be construed by the modern world as that of a venerable institution catching up with the insights of the age. There is a real danger of even our best theology being so insulated from the realities of our times that it seems to an outsider to be nothing more than the private game of a select few, the history of life in a ghetto.

CLEMENT DUNNE, O.S.B.

NO EXIT, by Sebastian Moore. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, 1968. 12s. 6d.

WHY CHRIST? by Christopher Butler, *Libra Book*. 8s. 8d.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS? by Otto Betz. *S.C.M. Paperback*. 7s. 6d.

Fr Moore's book is characterized equally by passion, lucidity, confusion. His mind follows an Arthurian quest, the grail sometimes glimpsed through the trees, the glow of its imminent revelation stronger in the final chapters than in the earlier ones, in which some patience and faith are rightly needed to follow him as he paces, restless and urgent, through forests as trackless as any in Mallory.

No Exit is primarily a meditation on the human. *Ecce Homo*: the humanity of Christ echoes in the Christian mind, moving it more deeply than it has yet understood and articulated. In this book Christ is the 'sheerly human': that which we protect in the normal working of our relationships, that which is hidden by the roles we perform, is beyond the

attitudes we strike, beyond even the nihilist postures of modern sensibility. The trial of Christ is the testing, in full public, of that humanity which we hardly dare show to our wives, whose deep secreting in the innermost caves of our privacy is the condition of our characteristic crime: our deep neglect of people. *Ecce Homo*: naked humanity stands before the judges, who are sane and decent men, doing their duty by the sanity and decency they represent, and accepts annihilation for being human.

Fr Moore's prose style, to its credit, owes more to Laing than to the theologians, and his subject, too, is alienation. But the ground he opens up is, for me at least, that of Augustinian orthodoxy. Unalienated humanity is eschato-

logical, and Fr Moore's eschatology is not that of Teilhard or the New Left. The book teems with insights, and many are into the way in which we can again pray with sincerity: 'There is no health in us.' The Kingdom comes, has come, whether we like it or not. It is a radical critique of the whole world in which we live, and which, in its social, economic and religious institutions, has formed us.

Bishop Butler's world is rather different. Here 'rational animal' walks again, unscathed. It is the traditional world of Roman Catholic sanity, where the claims of the various higher religions are passed in review and found variously wanting, by comparison with Catholicism, the sane man's choice. There is no reference to 'piercing sense' or 'sizzling flash', to the unspeakable revelation which is at the centre of *No Exit*. I may say the only point at which Fr Moore's prose breaks down is where he skirts the revelation; and he makes it seem as if this is where prose *ought* to break down. At various points in the book he is forced out of prose altogether: takes to verse. Belief, as he means it, is utterly 'impossible': outside the prose world. . . . 'The theologians, who don't really believe. . . .' Compare again with Bishop Butler's Augustan periods: 'The lesson of history appears to be that a vigorous, widely held theistic belief requires the stimulus and support of a traditional institutional religion.' This, in Fr Moore's book, is just what is opposed to the Kingdom, along with all the other institutions by which men maintain the balance of life, 'as blind men understand the balance'. Until we realize how 'impossible' Jesus was for the sane man of his or any other period we cannot experience his unalienating power. 'Until we understand how historical man clamoured for the death of Christ we cannot understand how historical man can recognize in him his own salvation.'

Bishop Butler's book has certain irreducible excellences. It is translucently written, except where the passionate Platonism on which it is based obtrudes a dualism so self-evident to the writer, so baffling to some readers, that the argument risks losing coherence. The point is of great importance, so I shall give one example, where he argues that love is imperilled by 'the accidental and relative nature of the object': that human beings are based on the physical, on chaos; that it didn't *have* to be Jonathan, it could have been someone else. The bishop clearly feels this as an agonizing undermining of love, and can go on to the necessity of

loving God. I find myself puzzled because the basic anthropology seems disputable. There is something absolute about people which death does not modify. It *couldn't* have been anyone else because it *was* Jonathan. And so on. With the Old Testament, where the philosophical machinery is deliberately absent, because we are dealing with 'revelation', these difficulties do not occur, and his outstanding qualities of exposition are very clear.

It would seem that Bishop Butler and Fr Moore, both members of the Downside community, represent also necessary poles of the universal Church. To an extent they represent Catholic and Protestant. It is only within the frameworks of the bishop's 'traditional institutional Church', Jewish or Roman Catholic, that the experience of the New Testament can occur; even though this experience may be a radical rejection of traditional religion as such. Fr Moore's 'sizzling flash' clearly has parallels in the Protestant theology of conversion. The protest against tradition is there, too. We are asked, in effect, to go back behind even the early Church, to the Kingdom as it was preached before even the first Christians had begun to interpret it and, as Fr Moore thinks, to de-fuse it of its impact. He follows Bultmann in seeing a dichotomy between the proclaimed Christ and the historical man, but reverses him in seeing the revelation as mediated by the latter, not the former; so that it is our urgent task, equally with secular scholars and critics, to unearth a sense of the historical man.

Otto Betz's *What do we know about Jesus?* is an intelligent and learned survey of the possibilities of such a quest. His chief relevance here is that he argues the dichotomy between the proclaimed Christ and the historical Jesus to be not nearly as extreme as, following Bultmann, we have tended to believe. His use of the Essene Scrolls in this context is particularly enlightening. To take a point at which he and Fr Moore are in agreement, that those who tried Christ acted correctly, not as villains in any accepted sense, it is fair to say that for Herr Betz this is a matter of good scholarship, and thus of good religion, bearing particularly on antisemitism. For Fr Moore it points to a fundamental betrayal by the Church, even in the early stages, of the message preached to it; marks a stage in the successful take-over of Christianity by traditional religion; represents the de-fusing of the passion and death of Christ by its representation in the hieratic terms of a

western. The Kingdom was preached by a real man, to real men, in real words. The time has come to re-find it. It is an old Protestant cry. How much better that it should come to us out

of Downside than from across the barriers of prejudice and non-communion made largely by political accident at the Reformation.

JULIAN DAVID

THE NATURE OF MORAL JUDGEMENT, by Patrick McGrath. *Sheed and Ward, London. 327 pp. 32s. 6d*

This book is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with various theories of moral philosophy put forward by philosophers of the Anglo-Saxon tradition since 1900, and the second of which gives the author's own account of the matter. Fr McGrath has performed a considerable service in providing a clear, concise and sympathetic account of the positions of emotivists such as Ayer and Stevenson and the views of later philosophers such as Urmson, Hare and Toulmin. Nor is this account limited to mere description of the theories of these philosophers; the author offers precise and perceptive criticisms and comments of his own on their arguments and conclusions. In particular, one may hope that this survey will help to bridge the gap between moral theology and contemporary moral philosophy.

Inevitably in the short compass of 200 pages or so, there are omissions and general summaries whose brevity could be misleading. It is hard, for instance, to be fair to logical positivism in three pages or to assess the impact of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* in not many more. More serious, perhaps, are the omissions: even in so small a space, some mention might have been made of Von Wright's *Varieties of Moral Goodness* and of the recent work of Mrs Foot, the main opponent of Hare's prescriptivist theories. In fact the views of Mrs Foot might have served to connect the two parts of the book since her descriptivist interpretation of moral terms offers some support to Fr McGrath's own criticism of the emotive and prescriptive positions. But these are minor criticisms; the book would be well worth reading for the first part alone, since it provides a good introduction and a fair critical appraisal of contemporary English moral philosophy.

In the second part of the book Fr McGrath gives his own account of the nature of moral judgement and the ultimate criterion of morality. He argues that moral statements have an objective content: like other propositions they are true or false and do not merely convey the attitude of the speaker. He distinguishes the meaning of moral terms such as good and their criteria of application; the former he analyses in terms of the concepts

of function and need, and for the latter he uses the notion of right to provide what he calls logico-empirical criteria for the application of good in moral contexts. He argues that fundamentally it is because men are persons that they have rights and that this is the ultimate criterion of morality which gives moral statements an objective truth value.

This line of argument seems extremely fruitful and illuminating and does appear to offer some means of connecting fact and value in a way that does justice to our basic moral intuitions and to the way that moral terms are actually used. In particular Fr McGrath's analysis and explanation of logico-empirical criteria as the basis of the objectivity of moral statements does seem to throw real light on the problem. Again he is surely correct to make rights logically prior to duties and not the other way round. Furthermore it seems vital to connect the concept of person to that of rights and to make it central to any account of morality.

Unfortunately, however, Fr McGrath does not do justice to his own argument by trying to compress it into such a short space, with the result that there is a number of lacunae and obscurities in his account. For one thing he appears to have been too greatly influenced by the other theories he analyses and therefore concentrates too much on moral terms and their use instead of trying to set moral behaviour squarely in the context of other human actions. For it does seem that to give a correct account of moral judgement one needs to analyse more general concepts of philosophical psychology such as act, intention, reason and motive in order to see how specifically moral behaviour fits in. This deficiency comes out in Fr McGrath's use of a spurious distinction between doing and not doing to exemplify the difference between meeting the obligations arising from another's rights and respecting the rights of another. He says that the first requires the doing of something positive, the second merely the negative action of refraining from doing something. A case of the first would be paying one's taxes and a case of the second not killing someone. He then argues that, when a man overcomes the temptation to kill someone, the