

these complex narratives, by raising larger questions about borrowings and about the dramatic structure and mythic consciousness. But Brown has chosen wisely to do one thing well, and restricts himself to redaction criticism throughout the book.

The book consists of an extended treatment of each narrative, providing translation, verse-by-verse technical notes, and a commentary on the theological intent and meaning of the pericope. A series of appendices provide discussions on the historicity of a number of areas (Davidic descent, the place of the birth, the census, etc.). A longer theological essay, rather than the brief epilogues at the end of the sections on Matthew and Luke, would have enhanced the value of Brown's work.

Although he highlights all the differences between the two infancy narratives, Brown does see a common understanding of the birth of Jesus in their tendencies "to stress the intrinsic connection of that birth with what has preceded in Israel" and "to develop the christological significance of the birth and thus its incipient continuity with what will follow in the Gospel" (p. 497). The infancy narratives become the link between the Christian

reality and the Jewish heritage in their recapitulation of themes from Jewish history; and their repeated insistence upon God's intervention reaffirms the conviction of God's work in Jesus as the Son of God. The infancy narratives not only recapitulate the past; they prefigure the future as well: the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders in the form of King Herod; the role of Bethlehem and Nazareth as places of prophecy; the roles of Joseph (in Matthew) and Mary (in Luke) as prefigurements of the continuity of the Christian community with the synagogue.

Such a work as Brown's can be of value to those interested in the formation of christology and should be a cause for admiration of the theological subtlety and literary mastery of the evangelists. In view of this, to make a crude notion of history and fact the shibboleth for entering into a study of the infancy narratives and into Christian theology itself would betoken a rather primitive positivistic stance. Brown has done us a service by his respect for the interweaving of theology and history and shows us the maturity of the critical method in this regard.

ROBERT SCHREITER

BIBLICAL STUDIES: The Medieval Irish Contribution, ed. Martin McNamara, *Dominican Publications*, 1976 pp. 164 £2.50

This volume is a collection of four papers read at the General Meeting of the Irish Biblical Association in April 1974, to which is added a translation of a seminal paper by Bernhard Bischoff, who stands behind the studies of the younger scholars that make up the rest of the book. The general editor shows a certain—quite unnecessary—lack of confidence in his contributors. At any rate he tells us they all have Ph.D's, which is, I am afraid rather obvious. J. F. Kelly offers a study of seventh and eighth-century commentaries on Luke. Matthew was the favourite gospel of the early Irish—and not only them—but they were writing about Luke as early as the mid-seventh century. Dr Kelly is able to point to evidence that even at so early a date early Irish exegetes had a very respectable knowledge of patristic, as well as biblical, authors. Even more important they were also capable of original thought about the Gospel text. Dr Peter Doyle

contributes a brief essay on the origins and growth of the Irish Latin Bible. This is a simple essay mainly concerned to convey basic information about the nature and source of texts of the Bible in the early middle ages. He points out that the Vulgate arrived quite early in Ireland and has interesting remarks about the problems of mixed texts. Brian Grogan writes about early Irish eschatological teaching and points to the, at first sight surprising, fact that eschatology dominated early Irish theology. He is much concerned with the problem of purgatory. Frederick MacDonnacha writes about the only surviving Irish *homiliarium*. The texts are late but Dr MacDonnacha suggests they were composed by a member of the community of Armagh in the mid-eleventh century. The four papers add up to a useful contribution to knowledge though some awareness of the wider intellectual context from which most of the works discussed came

would be welcome. The four authors all tend to assume a dichotomy between 'Irish' and 'English' intellectual traditions that did not exist: the name of Bede hardly occurs. The important essay by Bischoff is a very much more considerable piece of work and it is good to have it in English. There is a curious error to the effect that Benedict Biscop lived for years with Arch-

bishop Theodore—unless one thinks a two-year period is properly so described—that looks very like a translator's error but is in fact what the German text says. Still the fault is venial: this is a very good essay. The book is nasty to look at but very cheap for these days.

ERIC JOHN

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH AND STATE by S.T. Coleridge, edited by John Colmer. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, 1976. pp. lxxviii + 303 No price

The Collected Works of Coleridge, sponsored by the Bollingen Foundation, is an enterprise of scholarship on the grand scale. The sixth volume (of thirteen) to appear is *Church and State*. The actual text is preceded by 68 pages of introductory material, accompanied by detailed editorial footnotes, and followed by six appendices; the index takes up pages 239 to 303. In general, the extremely high standard of printing and pleasing presentation of the previous volumes is maintained, though there are occasional printing errors (e.g. on pages xxix, lxii, 99) and some irritations: for example, Coleridge's Greek quotations have been 'silently' corrected 'where appropriate' (a dubious practice where Coleridge, above all, is concerned) and, less forgivably, Eliot's *Notes* is mis-titled twice.

But more interesting than such minor blemishes is a larger problem about the role of such scholarship. The editorial apparatus has four main purposes: to trace Coleridge's sources; to relate the text to Coleridge's other writings, even citing his uses elsewhere of individual phrases; to provide some background to the events which prompted the appearance of *Church and State* (the constitutional debate centred on the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829); and to trace the influence of the work on later thinkers. In all these areas, John Colmer does a predictably competent job.

But there are dangers involved. A minor one is an air of constant objectivity which is occasionally inappropriate or misleading: e.g. a footnote credits *all* Roman Catholics ('still') with an interpretation of 1 Cor. 3:15 (p. 106n), while another is, at least, tactless in its formulation concerning the same religious body: 'Joseph Blanco White described the evil effects of the Roman Catholic religious system on

the innocence and sanctity of the female mind in *Practical and Internal Evidence Against Catholicism*, chap. 5' (p.123n)—one might compare this with the formulation 'Ridley was burned for his supposedly heretical views' (p. 142n) and detect a certain bias. But the Blanco White example is in fact symptomatic of a deeper flaw: in that case, Colmer has clearly adopted a phrase of Coleridge as his own editorial statement, thereby allowing no distancing from Coleridge which might turn into critique. On more important issues, a similar encapsulation within Coleridge's thought occurs negatively, by editorial silence. For example, Coleridge's argument concerning the kind of appeal to be made to Irish Catholics to support the British Constitution rests upon a presumption that Irishmen *are* British and that Ireland is rightly to be governed under that Constitution; one would welcome at least an editorial reference to the history of this dubious notion; all that is offered are footnotes elucidating specific historical allusions in Coleridge's text. When Coleridge embarks on more general historical arguments and theses (e.g. about Henry VIII and monasteries), no footnote cites historical works which might guide the reader in judging Coleridge's interpretation of history. What is apparent here is an attitude to the text which sees it first and foremost as a text *by Coleridge*, to be read alongside other texts by Coleridge, *not* as a work to be read and quarrelled with as an attempt at political theory, historical interpretation and political intervention—a work to be *judged* in those terms. On one of the few occasions when Colmer does challenge Coleridge, the result seems bizarre: a passage which indignantly sketches the decline of education into utilitarian instruction receives a footnote: 'The main issue, which Coleridge