

misleading. What is Origen's *De Principiis* but an attempt to deal with precisely the questions we have about the apparent unfairness of life?

The background to the patristic viewpoint is to be found in philosophical debates about fate and providence. The background to their comments on facing suffering is to be found in the *consolatio*. Insufficient attention is given to this background, and there is no attempt to draw on the material most indebted to it, like the consolatory letters of Basil of Caesarea, or John Chrysostom's correspondence with Olympias. Nevertheless, a good impression is given of patristic use of scripture in facing these questions, and of the importance of the cross and resurrection in giving assurance of victory over suffering and death. On the whole the translations are readable, though the style of much patristic writing is an acquired taste, and probably many readers will find it difficult to concentrate on much of it at a time. For all that the editors are to be congratulated on attempting the task, and for the manner in which it has for the most part been accomplished.

FRANCES M. YOUNG

THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM by Gavin D'Costa. *Blackwell* 1986, pp. 155, £8.95.

In this book Gavin D'Costa (an Indian Roman Catholic from East Africa who is a lecturer in the West London Institute of Higher Education) examines three types of Christian attitude to non-Christian religions that have been current in the last hundred years. First, there is 'pluralism' according to which Christianity 'should be seen as just one among many equally salvific paths to the divine reality' (p. 7). Secondly, there is 'exclusivism' that maintains 'that other religions are marked by humankind's fundamental sinfulness and are therefore erroneous, and that Christ (or Christianity) offers the only valid path to salvation' (p. 52). Thirdly, there is 'inclusivism' according to which God is salvifically present in non-Christian religions although the latter are fulfilled in Christ and the Church. The substance of the book is devoted to critiques of Hick, Kraemer and Rahner as representatives of these three types respectively. D'Costa opts for a form of inclusivism that will do justice to the following two axioms: 'that salvation comes through God in Christ alone, and that God's salvific will is truly universal' (p. 136).

This is a valuable survey. The classification according to the preceding three types is valid; and the discussion of the three writers chosen is thorough. D'Costa's criticisms of Hick and Kraemer are both fair and cogent. Thus he points out that Hick's postulation of belief in an all-loving God as the basis of his 'Copernican' theology excludes large areas of Hinduism and Buddhism from which a personal God is absent (just as, we might add, it excludes all those manifestations of polytheism and animism in primitive religions which pluralists are apt to ignore but from which so many missionaries of earlier times proclaimed deliverance). Again, D'Costa observes that Hick's claim for identity among religions presupposes a highly questionable view of the Incarnation in terms of 'myth'. D'Costa then shows, with reference to Kraemer, that exclusivism ignores obvious points of similarity between Christianity and other religions; that it raises a special difficulty with regard to the Old Testament; and that it gives no answer to the tormenting question raised by the fact that millions of people have never heard of Christ. We are also forced to wonder whether Kraemer is consistent.

I agree with D'Costa in subscribing to inclusivism (that seems to be the only course open if we reject pluralism and exclusivism). I also agree with him when he maintains that, although Christians attach supremacy to Christ as the expression of God's saving will and see in him the fulfiller of all religious truth, they can learn more about their own faith through dialogue with non-Christians. Yet D'Costa leaves us with these questions. Can we intelligibly claim (as he claims, e.g. on p. 84) that God in Christ is or was present in those to whom Christ is or was entirely unknown? D'Costa suggests that we interpret the relation

between Christ and non-Christians as one of 'final', not 'efficient' causality. But what exactly does this mean? Must we not here distinguish between God's presence in all men through his creative Word and his presence in Christ as the Word incarnate—a presence appropriated only through (explicit) faith? In order to affirm both the universality of God's salvific will and the New Testament's claims for Christ as the mediator of salvation must we not look to the next life when all those who have responded to God's manifold call will see Christ as the one in whom God's purpose for the human race is fulfilled? This would be a form of 'final' causality in accord with biblical eschatology. On p. 68 D'Costa hints at but does not explore this possibility. Full answers to these questions will involve analyses of 'grace' and 'salvation' that D'Costa does not provide. Finally, it is possible (and arguably desirable) to hold an 'inclusivist' view of other religions without using either Rahner's conceptual framework in general or his enigmatic concept of 'anonymous Christianity' in particular. Yet this is an informative book that confronts readers with the problems and the various ways of tackling them.

H.P. OWEN

PROBLEMS OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY by
Henning Graf Reventlow *SCM*. 1986. 13 + 194 pp. £6.95.

Henning Graf Reventlow is a leading authority on the history of biblical scholarship, and author of the massive *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (SCM 1984). This volume and its sequel (*Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, SCM 1986) constitute a complete bibliographical guide to the discussion of the themes and problems of 'biblical theology' this century. No stone is left unturned, thanks to the help of 'a series of assistants, all of whom I cannot mention by name' (p. vi)—the mind of a British theologian reels at the thought of having more assistants than one can name!—and contributions in all major European languages are listed and summarized. The arrangement of material is very roughly chronological, but since Old Testament theology has passed through reasonably well-defined phases this means that it is also broadly thematic: successive chapters deal with the place of the Old Testament in Christian theology, the quest for an organizational principle, 'the problem of history' (the longest chapter, testifying to the pivotal importance of Gerhard von Rad), the difficulty of locating the 'centre' of the Old Testament, and recent attempts to move creation, myth, and 'wisdom' back into the mainstream of interest.

Reventlow is extremely informative, judicious in his comments and criticisms, and completely in command of a forbiddingly vast subject. But to a great extent the very scale of the undertaking, once compressed into a book of less than two hundred pages, makes it self-defeating. If every significant scholar is to be cited and summarized, no-one will stand out very clearly. That the main lines of development emerge as clearly as they do is a tribute to the author's skill, but inevitably the trees obscure our view of the wood. Primarily this is a reference work, and it would surely have been better to recognize this in the typography. There are no footnotes—but this is no cause for rejoicing, for all the material that would be in them is simply incorporated into the text, usually in extended parentheses. The result is a typographical disaster. On one page (p. 155) twenty-one lines of the text separate the subject of a sentence from its verb, and this is by no means untypical. Such constructions are bad enough in German, and avoided even there by good writers, but English grammar and syntax simply will not sustain such a burden, and I found myself constantly having to re-read sentences in order to unscramble the endless brackets-within-brackets and quotations-within-quotations. The pity is that the translation (by John Bowden) is perfectly lucid, once one has reconstructed the basic sentences into which so much complex bibliographical information has been so unceremoniously stuffed. Even so, it would have been a great deal kinder on the reader to provide simple, clear summaries of the basic