

churches and to measure its strengths and weaknesses against the biblical sources. It also allows him to say some interesting things about the extent to which these authors have not always been well understood within the tradition that looks back to them. But, even at its best, Western theology of redemption tends to see what happened on the cross primarily as the overcoming of sin, and the restoration of the divine order of things that had been upset by sin. The cross dramatizes the restoration of God's benevolent dominion over the universe. Rey relates this preoccupation with the recovering of an order of things that had once existed to the typically mediaeval conception of society as a stable, hierarchically ordered arrangement of things that was at its best when it reproduced and maintained the structures and values carried by a traditional wisdom. This reflection of a mediaeval view of things in the classical western theologies of redemption offers a hint of why they, and their understanding of the cross, are unsuitable for contemporary believers. The contemporary believer belongs to a culture that has a much more historical way of seeing the drama of the universe. So many of the structures of our society are recognised as being oppressive that it is only in a new and unheard of future that salvation can be looked for, and not in the restoration of a golden age from the past that has been upset by sin. This is the messianic, eschatological side of salvation so strongly present in the preaching of Jesus. Rey would find in it a better key for understanding the mystery of the cross today. In Part III of his book he offers an essay in such a theology of redemption. It is centred on the messianic, eschatological rôle of Jesus, and on the way his life and death revealed the true face of God and inaugurated his reign. It draws freely and convincingly from contemporary eschatological theologies of hope, and from theologies of liberation. It integrates these ideas, however, within a christology and trinitarian theology that remains basically classical and dogmatic. Rey does not enter into direct debate with theologians whose eschatological and liberation theologies of redemption bring them to a radical questioning of the classical dogmatic tradition. He is writing for a generally informed audience rather than just for specialists. But one has a sense that he is well aware of what is at stake in this important contemporary debate and that he knows well where he stands. His book, combining as it does a strong biblical ground, a critical sensitivity to the Latin theological tradition, and a concern to respond to contemporary issues, is a convincing piece of theological writing.

LIAM G. WALSH OP

**SIMONE WEIL: 'THE JUST BALANCE' by Peter Winch, Cambridge University Press 1989, Pp viii + 234. £27.50 (h/b) £9.95 (p/b).**

Most philosophers in the Anglo-American philosophical world would not regard Simone Weil as a philosopher of major importance. The majority will not even have read her work. If they have heard of her at all, they will think of her as a religious mystic. Even those acquainted with her religious work may not realise how deeply philosophical her fundamental questions were. Although Winch recognises that it is often difficult to decide whether Simone Weil is engaged in philosophical reflection or religious meditation, he has made an explicit decision to expound her thought, as far as possible,

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without invoking her religious ideas. This is a risky policy, but one undertaken in the light of the philosophical ignorance concerning Simone Weil's work.

Simone Weil's starting-point is the problem implicit in Cartesian thought. How can one pass from an entirely self-contained consciousness to knowledge of the external world and to relations with other human beings? Even in her student dissertation, 'Science et Perception dans Descartes', Simone Weil emphasised that in his primitive relations to the world, an individual is active rather than reflective. In her later works, however, she emphasised the importance of agreement in human reactions in relation to what she calls 'the dance of the body': seeing, touching, tasting, smelling. It is in the contexts of such agreements that methodical modes of behaviour and enquiry develop. This includes the formation of formal concepts, as in geometry, and their fruitful application to the physical surroundings. Winch brings out striking comparisons between the development of these ideas in Simone Weil and the development of related ideas in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Simone Weil was well aware that the kind of agreement we often take for granted in our dealings with the natural world cannot equally be taken for granted in our dealings with each other. Even in her early work, 'Reflections Concerning the Causes of Liberty and Social Oppression', she was aware of the difference between the freedom which comes from getting what one wants, and the freedom which comes from the character of the activities one engages in, whether attended by success or failure. But, in this context too, the latter kind of freedom can only be appreciated when, as in Simone Weil's later work, recognition is given to the communal activities human beings engage in. It is in terms of these activities that a notion of justice is arrived at which is not the product of a negotiation dictated by prudence.

For Simone Weil, justice is connected with respect for human beings, a respect which recognises differences, and the power to refuse which a human being should have. When this respect is denied in fundamental ways, as in slavery, Simone Weil says that human beings are reduced to things. This reduction does not underpin her conception of justice as its justification, but is itself only recognisable from the perspective of such justice.

The practice of justice may involve worldly disappointments for an adherent. If he is true to justice, however, this will not deter him. In this sense, the good he cares for is 'outside the world'. Yet, this adherence to the good is not free of the world's contingencies. Affliction may destroy it. But Simone Weil seems to be looking for a sense to life which is immune to such risk. This sense must be beyond human relationships, such as friendship, since they are all subject to risk; a fact which leads Simone Weil to speak harshly about them at times. It is at this point that Simone Weil's notion of a good outside the world goes beyond morality. It calls on the individual to renounce, not simply worldly expectations, but legitimate moral expectations, such as gratitude or apology. This renunciation depends on seeing offences against human beings as spiritual offences. This, in turn, depends on the rejection of theodicies based on conceptions of a partial providence. From the very silence of the heavens, where

explanation of human suffering is concerned, comes the recognition that nothing is ours by right, and a love of human beings which they do not have to earn or qualify for. Simone Weil calls this love 'supernatural', since it cuts across our natural expectations. This love is a source of energy 'outside the world'.

Peter Winch is correct to distinguish between these reflections and the metaphysical arguments which dominate philosophy of religion. He emphasises, however, that it is equally important to recognise that her reflections are meant to clarify what concept-formation comes to where the notion of God is concerned. This matter needs to be stated with some care. While it is true that sense can only be made of the supernatural in terms of the relation in which it stands to natural responses, it does not follow that religious responses are extensions of natural responses. On the contrary, they transform them.

Peter Winch has certainly written the book which philosophers in the Anglo-American world need. Whether they will heed it is another matter. In this respect, Winch's comparisons between Weil and Wittgenstein may prove to be a disadvantage since, at the moment, there is a widespread neglect of Wittgenstein's philosophical insights. There is an industry in books *about* Wittgenstein, but little appropriation of his way of discussing philosophical issues. Peter Winch shows that Simone Weil's importance too lies in the originality and integrity of her investigations. Philosophers will be poorer if the neglect of her continues.

D.Z. PHILLIPS

**SHARING THE VISION: CREATIVE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND LAY LIFE**, by Lavinia Byrne, S.P.C.K. 1989, Pp. 101. £4.95.

The underlying conviction of this book is that 'both lay life and religious life have a vision and both are for sharing'. (p. 99). The continuing value of the religious life is taken for granted, and much is made of what the different strands of that life have to say to lay people today.

Considerably less is made of the complementary contribution the laity might make to the religious, though there is an intriguing comparison of religious to married people. Of marriage Lavinia Byrne writes: 'To come this close to another person is to make oneself vulnerable and open and to reveal the depths of one's desire. My married friends take a far greater risk than I do; they risk letting another human being this close, while I back off in the name of God.' 'Professed religious', she continues, 'are too easily able to hide from the demands of intimacy. We ask married people to carry the burden of that part of the Christian story for us and we berate them when they fail.' (p. 76). This is a grave indictment, but does not lead to any radical questioning of the religious life despite much criticism of how it has often been misunderstood.

Given that Vatican II says a degree of chastity, poverty and obedience is incumbent on every Christian, this book asks what is the difference between lay people and religious. The answer given is that religious 'commit themselves to following Jesus in this way; they make this commitment the matter of a formal promise and ask the Church to identify them in terms of