

explorations of the world that still further strengthen his belief.

The concept of probability, so freely used in everyday speech, is much more difficult than might appear, and also deserves more analysis. In the chapter on evolution the author speaks of 'chance' as if it were a causative factor. What does this mean? Can it mean anything but an unknown cause, and then one is led to analyse the causal process, to identify its author and to understand the reason for its intelligibility. Concerning design, the arguments have to be re-thought against the background of evolutionary theory. As Newman remarked, 'I believe in design because I believe in God; not in a God because I see design'.

This book may be recommended to anyone who wants a clear overall survey of the world-view of modern science, and its implications for belief in God. But it needs to be supplemented by an equally clear and comprehensive account of natural theology such as that provided by Brian Davies' book on *The Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford 1982).

PETER HODGSON

THE GOD OF JESUS CHRIST by Walter Kasper. *S.C.M.*, 1984. pp. x + 404. £12.50.

The book begins with an excellent account of the problematic character of faith in God at the present time. The objections of 'protest atheism', which bases its rejection of God on the experience of evil in the world, are particularly well described. Kasper's central thesis is that contemporary atheism can only be met by a Christian doctrine of God that is firmly grounded in God's historical self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Monotheism is not a boo-word for Kasper as it is for Moltmann (provided it is concretized (sic.) by the trinitarian Christian confession), but there is a post-Enlightenment 'heresy of Christian theism' (p. 285) which is powerless in the face of modern atheism and which must be sharply differentiated from a proper trinitarian understanding of God.

What then is the distinctive nature of the God of Jesus Christ? How is his nature known to us? And how does faith in him meet the challenge of atheism? He is the God revealed in scripture and tradition, and Kasper leads us through the familiar evidence provided by scripture and the early church as it relates to the person of Christ, the person of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Trinity. The account is well-documented, shows detailed knowledge, and is carefully and skilfully presented. But the presentation is in a form which shows everything as pointing forward unhesitatingly and inevitably to the truth of the trinitarian doctrine as defined by the later church.

It is this feature of Kasper's account that gives rise to serious misgivings about the whole conduct of his argument. Scripture can be presented as supporting his case as strongly as it is, because it is selectively cited and interpreted in the light of those beliefs to which it did in the long run give rise. The fathers are assessed in similar vein. Thus it is said of Origen that 'despite numerous ambiguous statements' and 'many formulas that suggest subordination (his) intention at every point is to maintain the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father' (p. 256). All this in my judgment is illegitimate eisegesis. Kasper is not easy to argue with because later orthodox developments of doctrine are regularly described as soteriologically and doxologically motivated penetrations into the inner mystery of earlier confessional statements and not speculative developments from them. In itself that distinction is not without force. Doctrinal development neither does nor should proceed by a process of logical deduction from earlier affirmations. That fact makes the assessment of what is an appropriate development notoriously difficult to judge in a way that Kasper does not adequately acknowledge. If the argument he develops is to work, two premises would seem to be requisite, both of which I believe to be false: (1) that the method and motivation of the heretics, such as the Arians, was the exact reverse of the orthodox, and (2) that the fact that a development is soteriologically motivated can be regarded as

sufficient evidence of its truth.

Even if Kasper's reading of the evidence has more to be said for it than I am ready to allow (and that is certainly possible), I cannot believe that the issue is anything like as clear-cut as he presents it. Paul in Rom. i, 3f. 'is *clearly* saying that Jesus does not first become Son by reason of the resurrection' (p. 174); 'talk of the Son being sent by the Father *clearly* presupposes the pre-existence of the Son' (ibid.); 'the early post-apostolic church was *fully aware* of the trinitarian structure of Christian salvation' (p. 249); 'monotheism has *always* been a political program as well as a religious' (p. 307). However true the substantive affirmations expressed by those sentences may be, the overconfident words that I have italicized seem hard to justify. A tentativeness in argumentation and claim may be a disappointment. But consistently to fail to acknowledge it where it is appropriate is to distort the true picture and to suggest a misleading conception of the situation in which Christian faith finds itself.

To challenge in these ways the adequacy of Kasper's argument is not to deny the value of much that he wants to emphasize about the Christian understanding of God. But at this point too he is inclined to claim too much. Thus in the final paragraph of the chapter on "Jesus Christ, Son of God", he recalls the problem he had set out so well at the beginning and writes: "This 'sympathetic' God as he reveals himself in Jesus Christ is the definitive answer to the question of theodicy, the question on which theism and atheism alike founder. If God himself suffers, then suffering is no longer an objection against God" (p. 197). The suffering of God may be, as I believe, a necessary condition for any response to the problem of suffering, but it is surely too cavalier to present it as a fully sufficient response.

The translation is a considerable improvement on that which was made of Kasper's earlier book, *Jesus the Christ*, but we still meet such ugly neologisms as 'mediatizing' (p. 162) and 'giftness' (pp. 225–6). The proof-reading is extremely careless—not just wrong letters but wrong words (e.g. for 'most' read 'not' (p. 93), for 'tactic' read 'tacit' (p. 169), for 'and' read 'the' (p. 177), for 'of' read 'by' (p. 224) etc.). Ordinary misprints are far too numerous to list. For all my disagreement with the argument of the book, it sets out its case in a clearly ordered and systematic way. It deserved better production than it received.

MAURICE WILES

UNION WITH GOD, by Desmond Tillyer. *Mowbray*, 1984. Pp. 111. £3.75.

This book offers a very bland and schematic exposition of the doctrine of St John of the Cross, aimed confidently at the general reader. It is based on the most schematic of all St John's works; no use at all is made of the poems, and the author is quite untroubled by any suspicion that maybe St John was not a very good commentator on his own poems.

Tillyer provides some useful notes on some of the terminology used by St John, especially his psychological terms; but the reader's confidence is somewhat diminished by the author's apparent ignorance of the meaning of "ligature" and even of the classic list of the cardinal virtues (which he extends to include the theological virtues).

The author seems blissfully unaware of the theological problems posed by his systematic account of "the mystic way". Indeed, he rather encourages the suspicion that the whole thing rests on two very dubious propositions, namely that *abusus tollit usum* and that *gratia tollit naturam*. His rather half-hearted attempt to evade the second of these propositions is less than convincing; he is, for instance, less than cogent in claiming that St John does not disparage emotions as such and then quoting (without further comment) a text in which St John, on the face of it, is precisely disparaging emotions.

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