

servers? Can Catholics be cremated? Do children have to go to confession before their First Communion? Are Roman Catholics allowed to be members of Masonic organisations? Can only priests and deacons preach in church? The explanations are clear, and generally reliable enough although some points should have been revised for republication. The concept of mortal sin is not in the 1983 Code and when used to answer question 13 needs to be explained; in forecasting the duration of an annulment case one should quote canon 1453, requiring that at first instance cases are not to last beyond a year; and canon 221 does not quite say that Christians can legitimately vindicate and defend their rights in the Church. It grants less. If this last answer was too optimistic, that to question 47 is too bleak. We are told that certain excommunicated persons are to be physically excluded from liturgical celebrations or those are to cease until such persons leave. But canon 1331 only affects *ministerial* participation, and in any event does not apply if a serious cause intervenes. The answer about Catholics belonging to the Masons ignores the 1983 declaration that such Catholics are in grave sin and cannot receive Holy Communion.

The above collection was sponsored by the Canon Law Society of America. The Society has also produced its third *Marriage Studies*, a collection of seven essays. Regrettably these reflections on canon law and theology can only be summarised here. T. Mackin concludes that Ephesians 5 does not provide the premisses for the doctrine that the marriage of two baptised Christians cannot end short of death once it is consummated, whilst R.J. Smith explores the status of mixed marriages in the Corinthian community. T.P. Doyle examines the moral inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of sexual intercourse. P.C. Glick studies divorce, marriage and living arrangements in the United States. J.R. Connery looks at the role of love in Christian marriage. R.C. Finn draws some general conclusions from a historical study of the increasingly debated question of faith and the sacrament of marriage. T. Rincon's subtle and impressive study of the doctrinal implications of civil marriage between Catholics (originally in a Spanish review) is a good foil to Finn's essay.

Whether in the detailed formulation of practical answers or in the larger discourse of the essays, The Canon Law Society of America shows an exemplary ecclesial involvement and keeps canon law firmly theological.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

**BACKWARD INTO LIGHT: THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS ACCORDING TO MATTHEW AND MARK** by J.L. Houlden. *SCM Press. 1987*  
Pp. x + 84. £3.95

There are two ways of introducing readers of the Gospels to modern scholarship. One is to describe the various skills needed and the history of their application to these documents of late antiquity. The other is to assume that the readers already know something about critical scholarship, and to work a few examples through. Since Mr Houlden was giving Holy Week lectures at a theological college, he chose the second method, using his examples not simply to display the critical exegete at work but also to consider how that work affects the life of faith and prayer.

The first two chapters and the epilogue rather anxiously raise the question of post-critical spirituality. 'Supposing prayer set great store by the virginity of Mary, then might the exegetical study, in the name of truth, give a licking to the truth already valued? Supposing prayer set great store by the Risen Christ and study of the origins of the idea left it dim and unsure, might not the licking be intolerable. How many such assaults could prayer survive? Might prayer even die?' He presents the case, and offers an answer. It really amounts to this: not that faith can be maintained despite critical doubt, but that the nature of faith is clearer and support for faith is firmer when the Gospels are critically studied.

The three middle chapters of the book put the passion stories of Mark and Matthew

side by side, and examine the differences. Assuming that Matthew used Mark's account, why did he make small changes and additions? Why did he introduce the earthquake, and the resurrection of the holy dead? or explicitly identify angelic activity? Why did he tell the story about the end of Judas, or the guard at the tomb? Why did he defy Mark and add well-developed resurrection appearances? Because, says Mr Houlden, Mark's account was enigmatic, rich and subtle. Jesus in his resurrection remains awesome and elusive as in his death. But Matthew has no reticence. He ties loose ends, elucidates mysteries, gives clear instruction. He might be answering the questions of a pert, inquisitive child. So he tells what happened next, forestalls a Jewish discrediting of reports about resurrection, makes that resurrection impressive and foolproof, and shows Judas no mercy in a rather typically vindictive way.

With perpetual caution Mr Houlden tries to feel his way into the minds of the two evangelists. Not without a reluctant admiration for Matthew, he always sides with Mark—constantly realising that the need to choose has raised important questions about the very nature of faith and Christian morality. In Mark faith comes as God's gift, in Matthew by his assault upon us. Mark intimates, Matthew demonstrates. Mark handles disaster by resignation, Matthew by requital. So one should move back from Matthew to Mark, against a great deal of ecclesiastical tradition—backwards into light, in fact.

This seems to me an admirable book, not only because I often agree with the author's judgements. (Not always! Why does he call Judas' remorse sterile when it drove him to suicide. In Jewish minds was not repentance and death sufficient atonement for crime, securing a place in the world to come?) But the book is worth studying, preferably in a group, extending to other parts of the Gospels, and so enriching one's spiritual resources.

K. GRAYSTON

**GOD OF OUR FATHERS, DO WE KNOW WHAT WE BELIEVE?** by Peter Vardy.  
*Darton, Longman and Todd, London. 1967, pp. 124. £3.95.*

This book satisfies a long outstanding need—a book on the Philosophy of Religion for the layman. It presents a clear, analytical and uncluttered account of four alternative ways in which it is possible to talk about God and attempts to work out the implications of and difficulties for each of these views in relation to the main areas with which religious believers are concerned, namely: miracles; prayer; eternal life; evil; religious experience; atheism; and finally, the resurrection.

The book is eminently readable though one does form the impression that the author became rather tired towards the end. The chapters on 'Religious Experience' and 'Atheism' lack the enthusiasm and acumen of the earlier chapters. This however is rectified in the final chapter on 'The Resurrection—the Final Question'. Here the crucial issue is rightly highlighted, viz., whether anyone who does *not* believe in the resurrection of Jesus as an individual with his memories can claim to be a Christian. Vardy, to my mind, is too reserved over this—he writes in his very last sentence: 'In this sense, the resurrection of Jesus and what this means may still provide the crucial test of orthodoxy and thus pose the final question'. He should come off the fence and say that the crucial test of orthodoxy *is* whether one believes in the resurrection of Jesus as an individual with his memories. Those who do not so believe, e.g., those who subscribe to the third and fourth view of God (to be expounded in my next paragraph) whilst advocating views of great depth, insight and intellectual profundity *cannot* claim to be a Christian.

The book gets off to a bad start with an unilluminating quote from Buber: it's not a question (p. 3) of where believers stand in relation to the word 'God', but in relation to different conceptions of God. However having got off to a bad start it certainly makes good progress. Chapter 2 provides a useful background chapter. Chapter 3 is central; in it Vardy presents 'four possible views of God': (1) God as personal and everlasting; (2) God as a