

pursuance, and if religion alone can deal with certain crucial aspects of existence and make our lives appear worth living and our obligations binding, why not wager for religion?

As an argument, I do not find this form of the *tu quoque* impressive. For one thing, I do not see that dogmatic materialism (or scientism) and religion are the only options. One could be much more agnostic about science (and should be, in my opinion), and more pragmatic about common sense, admitting its lack of foundations and appealing only to its indispensability for everyday life and predictive success, both of which are questionable in the case of religious belief. Further, acknowledging, if we must, that morality and life generally are problematic in the absence of religion is not in itself an argument in favour of religion. Surely we need some positive evidence or argument in favour of the existence of something, as remarkable and as distant from our ordinary experience as God or the Indestructible or the One before accepting the undoubted consolations religion has to offer.

In any case, which religion? Here, Professor Clark's wide erudition about all manner of religions, sympathy to their practices and determination to concentrate on religion as a phenomenon appears to me to undermine to a large extent his case in favour of religion. While one can acknowledge that both the Homeric gods (about which he writes movingly) and Hindu practice have things to teach us about our roles in life, that both Buddhism and Abrahamic thought may point to significant aspects of our experience, that animism, monotheism and pantheism may all contain important moral insights, one wonders how all this can be synthesised in any way if one is taking the claims of these various systems to be literally true. Clark claims to be a realist about the world and such things, but his eschewal of argument and dogmatics in favour of phenomenological approach to religious practice left me quite unclear as to what it was we were being asked to wager in favour of. One reality that all these things are pointers to, the divine being, reality itself, all of us and the whole heart being part of God, this life being our dream-history—these and others were answers given at various times in the book. The nearest I could get to categorising Clark's position is that it is a combination of Buddhism and process thought which is at the same time happy to worship in an Anglican Church, but I would not be surprised if this were wrong, because it is never clearly stated. For example, I could not tell whether Clark conceives God or the One in personal terms or not, or whether the world and God are really separate. He might say, in both cases both, for he appears to revel in paradox. Nor could I see how he arrives at his final identification of God and the Buddha-nature, nor what this nature is conceived to be. I am afraid that in the end I was left with the uncomfortable feeling that a position so unclear and so syncretic and so consistent with almost anything is no more capable of sustaining one's endeavours than is the atheistic individualism Clark so clearly abhors; certainly we have here nothing on which a rational person could rationally wager: one needs at least some idea of what one is putting one's money on.

ANTHONY O'HEAR

**DEATH'S GIFT** by Nicholas Peter Harvey. *Epworth Press, 1985, viii + 152 pp. £3.95.*

The basic insight of this book is that the experience of the disciples at the crucifixion was akin to one of bereavement. And bereavement is not something to be 'got over' more or less successfully, but is the opportunity for a new and richer relationship to be created—if only the bereaved will surrender certain aspects of the old relationship. The book is very largely for the bereaved, and could not but be a striking help to anyone who has suffered such a personal loss. One wonders why this is all so very real to the author, until a very late chapter when he reveals the searing effect which the suicide of a close and respected friend had upon him, and the time it took him to achieve growth through this experience. But the insights of the book are by no means confined to such circumstances. There is a fascinating little study of Peter, who was so strongly chastened by Jesus, continually rebuffed, and finally forced out of his

infantile dependence on Jesus by a turmoil of emotion at his alienation (p. 35–37). There are also reflexions on the strength which company with the dying can bring; there is more to learn from than to give a dying person (p. 41).

The study of the resurrection-experience of the disciples grows out of such thoughts. The author has no reservations about the reality of the resurrection, but studies it in terms of Jesus' return to his bereaved friends. Why was it necessary that they should be thus orphaned? Because after a person is dead one can often see more clearly what that person meant, without the distraction of ephemeral clutter. The disciples are made to face up to themselves (a judgement) in readiness for the radically new demands which the resurrection appearances make upon them, when the barrier between two worlds was thinned in much the same way as it is by a bereavement. Their joy is not merely in seeing Jesus again but in the new relationship which is thus created.

And for Jesus himself the Passion and crucifixion were so terrible not merely because of the physical suffering but because of the crisis which this made in his relationship with his Father. For the sinless one death, the wages of sin, could not be appropriate, and yet it was demanded by his loving obedience to the Father. Here it seems that too much is made of 'he was made into sin' (2 Cor 5:21), which I would anyway translate 'he made the sinless one a victim for sin', which removes the ground for much theologising on the matter in this book.

But the whole book is a most thoughtful and sensitive study, making good use of many dimensions, theology, psychology, poetry to throw light on the mystery of death and make it a comfort rather than a terror.

HENRY WANSBROUGH OSB

**CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY I: Origins to the Twelfth Century**, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, 1986. pp. xxv + 502. £39.50.

The ambitious project for a 25-volume 'Encyclopedic History' of 'World Spirituality' gets off to a splendid start with this, the first volume devoted to Christian Spirituality. No doubt it falls short of 'encyclopedic history', but the editors have faced up frankly and imaginatively to the difficulties inherent in any large-scale attempt to deal with 'spirituality'. They have not tried to insist on any artificially narrow definition of the subject, and the combination of primarily historical articles and thematic articles works very well. Unavoidably some of the historically material is rather thin, and it is, at first sight, surprising that such major figures as Origen and Augustine do not receive any extended systematic treatment. But in fact the variety of rubrics in the book greatly enhances its interest, and there are, after all, other books which deal with patristics and medieval thought and with the history of spirituality in a more straightforwardly historical way.

The first part of the book, entitled 'Periods and Movements', takes us, more or less chronologically, from the beginnings of Christianity up to the twelfth century. Dionysius gets a chapter to himself, and Paul Rorem has dealt with him very well, along the lines of his monograph on the same writer. There is an excellent discussion of Anselm's *Prayers and Meditations* by Benedicta Ward. Otherwise most of the chapters deal with less individualised movements of thought or practice, dealing rather briskly with the outstanding figures they encounter on the way. Some of the chapters, notably that on 'Monasticism and Asceticism', are largely an exercise in church history, but this is more informative than an arbitrary concentration on 'spirituality' would have been.

The second part of the book, entitled 'Themes and Values', contains essays on such topics as grace, icons, virginity, 'ways of prayer and contemplation'. The article by Peter Brown on Virginity is scintillating, but all the contributions are interesting. Between them they illustrate vividly an exciting range of topics pertinent to what christianity was all about in the period up to the twelfth century.

It would, perhaps, have been a good idea to provide a single bibliography for the whole book, and also an index of modern names. And there are rather a lot of misprints, generally more amusing than annoying – though it is somewhat unfair on the Cistercians to designate their lairs as 'monstries'.

The quality of this volume augurs well for the rest of the series.

SIMON TUGWELL OP