

This last observation suggests that the reader needs to appreciate what the author seeks to accomplish in this book. Roy makes a helpful clarification of the book's purpose in his conclusion where he tells the reader that his book has not been intended as 'a full-fledged dialectic of opposed theses'. Neither is the book intended as an exercise in philosophical or doctrinal theology. Instead, the aim of the book is 'to show the similarities, indeed the convergence, between several Western and Japanese intimations of what escapes the purview of ordinary consciousness'. In this, Lonergan's cognitive theory is the *norma normans, sed non normata*, and certainly not allowed to become part of any dialogue among Christian mystics and Buddhists. This is a difficult work, certainly of interest to Lonergan scholars.

JAMES FREDERICKS

RELIGION: THE MODERN THEORIES by Seth D. Kunin, *Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003, Pp. viii + 232, £45.00 hbk., £14.99 pbk.*

The blurb on the cover of this book tells us that it is a 'splendid textbook for an undergraduate course in religion', and so I assumed that it would only take a couple of hours to produce this review. How mistaken I was.

It is, admittedly, a book that, in the space of 222 pages, covers remarkably adequately the significant thinking of social scientists on religion from the Marx of 1844 ('It is the *opium* of the people') to Steve Bruce in 2002. Overall it is a balanced book, though it could be criticised for allocating rather too much space to English-language writers. However, it is fairly densely written, assumes quite a lot of background knowledge, and if undergraduates are going to use this book they will have to have gone through a fairly solid preparatory course.

What, though, does it offer to the readers of *New Blackfriars*? Theologians who are interested in knowing what sociologists and anthropologists have been saying about religion could find it useful, but they will need to do some additional reading in the area. Moreover, they should be warned that there is hardly anything in the book about how through religious practices human beings may (or may not) deepen their understanding of God. In fact, the author is clearly very reluctant to use the terms 'superhuman' and 'supernatural', and it is easy to acquire the impression that he has little time for theology. Yet Dr Kunin is Head of the School of Divinity, Religious Studies and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen, and his publications include studies of aspects of Judaism and, most recently, *A Companion to Religious Studies and Theology*, which he has co-edited.

It is important to bear in mind what Dr Kunin says about his book in his Introduction. There he states that theories of religion ‘reside in a particular social context and in some sense are a reflection or a response to that context... This provisional nature of theory, seeing theory as a basis for argument rather than the end of an argument, underlies the choice of material included in this volume. We have chosen not to include those approaches to religion that are not based on empirical analysis’ (p. vii). We may disagree with the author’s choice, but at least he has been frank with us.

The book is divided into three sections. The first of these introduces the most important thinkers whose writing dominated twentieth-century social-scientific theorising on religion – Marx, Engels and the cultural materialists; Durkheim and the functionalist school (a rather confused treatment); Weber and his writing on the relationship between protestantism and the growth of capitalism; Freud (who is quite severely criticised) and Jung. Last of all in this section comes the book’s solitary theologian, the neo-Kantian Rudolf Otto, whose book *The Idea of the Holy* strongly influenced the phenomenological school.

Each chapter of the second section of the book focuses on one of the major theoretical approaches to the subject – some considerably more ‘major’ than others. The opening chapter, one of the most stimulating in the book, is on the role of religion in society and specifically on secularisation. Next comes a survey of psychological analysis of religion, and particularly of the influence of William James, followed by chapters on phenomenology, feminist thinking on religion, and anthropological approaches to religion. Social anthropology continues to be regarded as a separate subject from sociology in spite of the enormous importance of some anthropologists’ theory, read far outside the developing countries.

The author closes this section of the book with a discussion centred on four basic dichotomies (presented here as questions) arising from opinions aired in this section. Which perspective on religion should be privileged – that of the believer or the external view taken by the scholar? Is religion an irreducible phenomenon or not? Do religion and the history of religion stand in some sense outside the particular instances or histories of religions? Are all religions rooted in a primal religion or qualitatively distinct? This chapter is a useful though brief survey of the debates.

The final section of the book takes up the view suggested in a number of places in the book that the concept of religion as a definable category needs to be problematised, and that this is also true of specific elements that are usually seen as being constituent parts of religion – for example, ritual, symbol and myth. In order to illustrate the methodologies and issues involved, each of these is examined using the approaches of different anthropological theorists.

This is perhaps the most taxing section of the book, but it is the section that theologians might find most rewarding to engage with.

JOHN ORME MILLS OP

WHO ARE YOU, MY DAUGHTER? READING RUTH THROUGH IMAGE AND TEXT, translated by Ellen Davis, illustrated by Margaret Adams Parker, *Westminster John Knox Press, Harrow, 2003, Pp. xxiii + 123, £12.99 hbk.*

A coffee table book – in size and shape, with perhaps however a rather startlingly dark blue cover for that format – but on opening it, although the presentation is beautiful, as the style demands, what strikes one is the heavy and somewhat grimly black woodcuts which dominate it. *Not* a coffee table book! – but one which should, I think, have had a different presentation, a book not only translating and presenting the Book of Ruth but going well beyond this, showing how the Bible should be understood and some of its deepest messages appreciated. At the same time as being scholarly – though light in touch and exciting in style – it is unaffectedly, but noticeably, feminist. And those woodcuts turn out not to be grim so much as part of the message – a powerful indication as to how this somewhat odd book (Ruth) is to be read and understood.

The four chapters of Ruth are given us in ‘translation’ on the left-hand page in large print (but a little too fanciful and ethereal, I think, to represent quite adequately the down to earth chunkiness of the original Hebrew – sadly nowhere actually shown) whilst the right-hand, and sometimes the left too, is filled densely with notes and explanations. This layout is particularly successful.

I have given ‘translation’ those inverted commas because this is deliberately no translation suitable, say, for public recitation – smooth, clean, unassuming. It reads awkwardly; it is at times hardly English; it breaks many of the ‘rules’ of quality language – for it aims at presenting the original Hebrew as much as possible, in thought and action, and in feeling. The story line is set, after all, in a very primitive society, well over three thousand years ago: supposedly the immediate family background to David and his line. Ruth herself is of course none other than the great grandmother of David, one of the several foreign women in the genealogy of Christ, and Naomi, her mother-in-law, is far from a mere adjunct; it is through her primarily, not just Boaz who becomes her husband, that Ruth (a Moabite) is integrated into the life of Israel. Ruth is a book of powerful feminist undertones (despite the significance of the male saviour/hero figure) – the wood cuts emphasising this effectively.

The strength and quality of translation and the artistic representations, which do far more than just illustrate the work, should be an