

continue those (post Vatican II) efforts, not to reform or revitalise the understanding of the sacraments, but to lift that understanding to an entirely new level.' (p. 70)

The nub of the author's case is that western theology is bankrupt and exhausted because it has adopted the early Judaeo-Christian position that all further enlightenment and development must come from within its own ambit, and that the unevangelised world has nothing to teach it. The truth on the contrary is that prophecy always comes from outside the established system, to disturb and even shatter it; that revelation is always clothed in some culture and so all newly evangelised cultures will have something to contribute to the sum of revelation; and that the only locus of revelation is created reality which must be accepted and faced in all its own unmanageable ruggedness if the Church is to remain really in touch with the living Christ. The author's charge is that the Church, which realised and embraced these facts up to about the time of the Council of Trent, has since then turned its back on them in an arrogant assumption of the firm possession not only of all truth but of all possible means and avenues of development and revitalisation. In so doing it has adopted the same fatal path as the earliest Judaeo-Christian section of the Church.

The book is compelling and convincing, for those who still need such convincing, and makes stimulating and easy reading. It is however a lightweight production in terms of scholarship, marred by occasional errors and inaccuracies, somewhat given to sweeping generalisations and tediously repetitious.

CECILY BOULDING OP

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS by Glyn Richards,
Routledge Press, 1989, Pp. xi + 179. £30.00

Cooks tours proliferate in the region of theology of religions. In the last few years guide books have been produced by the dozen, showing us who's who, and where we should look for them on the differently constructed maps of theological classification. The mapping exercises usually have an inbuilt compass, leading the reader to the best vantage point from which to survey and evaluate the scene. A new guide book at £30.00 will have to justify itself. I'm not confident that this one succeeds.

Richards spends some eight chapters mapping out different Christian theological responses to the plurality of the world religions. Any writer carrying out such an exercise, given the enormous amount of mapping already done, should critically interact with previous categorizations, justifying his own and telling us why we need yet another map. Richards fails to do either of these jobs. Furthermore, should a tour guide for 1989 be quoting prices for 1985? One gets this impression when we read Richards' discussion of writers like Stanley Samartha, John Hick, or M.M. Thomas. With the latter, for instance, only his work up to 1975 is outlined, with no mention of important shifts of direction in his recent book, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake* (1987). Although Richards deals with Hick's work up to 1985, he fails to chart an important move away from the original 'Copernican revolution' already present in Hick's work in 1985 and made explicit in his recent Gifford Lectures, *An Interpretation of Religion*. It may be that

Richards' manuscript lay with the publisher for an inordinate amount of time, so this point should not be pressed. A more serious failing in a guide book is to miss out some important sights. This is certainly the case in two notable instances. The effect of liberation theology on the theology of religions is not properly charted and, although Paul Knitter is in the bibliography, his contribution, as with writers like Aloysius Pieris, and others working in this direction, goes unnoticed. The second instance concerns the 'Yale school', whose influence on the debate is growing rapidly (see Michael Barnes' new book, *Religions in Conversation*) mainly through the work of George Lindbeck and William Christian Sr. both of whom do not appear in the bibliography (although Wittgenstein's and Winch's influence is registered). All in all, Knitter's guide of 1985, *No Other Name*, (at a third of the price) is undoubtedly more detailed, more nuanced and more comprehensive.

The final three chapters are devoted to sifting through the tour, to isolate the interesting places worth pondering. In chapter 9, Richards argues that it is muddled to search for independent truth criteria to adjudicate between competing truth claims. He lists, and in my view rightly dismisses, certain candidates such as eschatological verification, morality and religious experience. He also claims that recent philosophical perspectives on the study of religion (citing Wittgenstein) support his case, but he does not discuss the work of those who would oppose his argument such as Swinburne or Plantinga. In chapter 10 he examines different notions of uniqueness in Christianity and Hinduism. He argues: given that there are no independent criteria for such claims, exclusivity and finality can be found in both traditions and such claims finally rest on 'religious judgements' (125). Therefore missionary activity is rightly the prerogative of both religions. In the final chapter Richards repeats much of the above suggesting that if the truth claims of others are to be taken seriously, uniqueness as defined above will not do. The approach of Hick is applauded as a possible way forward to facilitate the 'recognition that there are many revelations, many different types of religious experience ... and many different forms of truth.' (156). This conclusion would be far more plausible had Richards dealt with some of the wealth of criticisms of Hick's strategies. The way in which different truth claims are 'recognised' in Hick's recent work is to deny their cognitive force and to mythologize not only Christianity's claims, but also any troublesome ones in the world religions. Any scheme of global accommodation will have to deal with the question of truth. If incommensurability is suggested, then the notion of accommodation itself becomes redundant, as does inter-religious understanding. If, on the other hand, a certain amount of commensurability is allowed, then some claims are, in the final wash, going to contradict others. Richards casts little light on this dilemma. If one of the major arguments of this book is to show that uniqueness in the form of exclusivity or finality is a major stumbling block to taking truth claims in other religions seriously—then Richards is simply stating a well recognized problem, without really furthering the debate into this issue.

GAVIN D'COSTA