

saying and through the most elementary discussion of the principles of redaction criticism before getting down to work).

In his valuable study of the theology of Q the author shows how the Q community seems to have a non-passion Christology—a point long recognized—but concentrates on the themes of discipleship and judgment. This is the reason for the prominence given to the sayings about the future Son of Man; according to E. they even evolved a special *Gattung* of sayings which he dubs the 'eschatological correlative' sayings in the form, 'as . . . so will be the Son of Man', warnings to the present generation of the imminence of his coming and judgment. The whole section of Q represented by Luke 11, 14-32 consists of three consecutive pericopes on discipleship, the response to Christ and judgment, which is itself part of a larger whole on discipleship, continuing till 13, 9. In Matthew, too, it is part of the section in which the great contrast is being shown in the response to Christ which joins Matthew's discourses on apostleship and on parables, the great divide between those who are with Christ and those who are against him and who receive instruction only in

parables. Yet there is a difference between Matthew and Luke in their treatment of Jonah: to Luke Jonah is primarily a preacher before a judgment, as was Jonah at Nineveh; to Matthew he is the antetype of the resurrection (whence his insertion of the quotation about the whale). But both evangelists, Matthew with a clearer contrast, teach that rejection of Jesus may be excusable during his life, when it was possible not to understand his message, but cannot be so after the sign of the resurrection. This is the meaning of their, or rather Q's, change in Mark's text in the passage about blasphemy against the Son of Man and against the Spirit.

The history of the development of the sayings on the sign of Jonah is admirably traced, with some interesting parallels in the development of other sayings in Q. There is a fair share of dullness and repetitiveness, and some theses which are not satisfactorily proved, e.g. that the Son of Man Christology originated in the Q-community, developing from the use of the title 'Lord'. But the central thesis is a distinctly valuable contribution to the history and theology of the gospels.

HENRY WANSBROUGH

**GOD AND THE WORLD**, by Hugo Meynell. *SPCK*, 1971. 152 pp. £2.50.

It was with some qualms that I allowed myself to be persuaded by the Editor to review Dr Meynell's new book. It isn't always easy to discuss fairly a book written by a personal friend; and, not being myself professionally engaged in reflection on the philosophy of religion, it seemed not unlikely that I might find myself unsympathetic to a book described by Dr Meynell in his Introduction as a book on the philosophy of religion, meaning 'the description, analysis, and criticism of the language and concepts of religion' (p. 1). Still more, the book carries a subtitle, 'The Coherence of Christian Theism', and it seemed that under cover of an argument conducted in the tone and style of the English tradition in philosophy, one might, after all, be being exposed in fact to surreptitious solicitation in favour of integralist re-rustinization.

The point of disclosing these ill-natured suspicions here is of course because other people might be liable to them too, and because they would not, I think, be justified. Dr Meynell has given us a very good book, serious, cool, cogent and succinct (152 pages,

including notes, a substantial bibliography and index), which doesn't seem to me to shirk difficulties and frequently offers genuine clarification. 'Classical theism', it emerges from this book, deserves a good deal more respect from religiously inclined persons than it has been allowed, usually without examination, in recent years.

It is a distinct advantage of Dr Meynell's treatment that he begins, as he points out, with language which has actually been used about God, particularly in the Christian tradition, and not with language or concepts which might be used about a possible God. So he offers as a preliminary definition of 'God': 'that which makes the things and brings about the events of which the world consists' (p. 10); and he ingeniously re-applies the terminology proposed by Ross Ashby in his *Introduction to Cybernetics* to mediate Aristotelian concepts of movement to the dubious modern reader (though I very much doubt whether concepts of cybernetics can be properly described as 'parallel' to Aristotle's).

Any theism must be judged by its treatment of the problem 'God and Evil', and Dr

Meynell's version of classical theism in his chapter on Evil seems to me, within its prescribed limitations, remarkably successful (supposing that any treatment of the problem can be 'successful'). In an earlier chapter he had convincingly argued for a 'libertarian' thesis, by showing that 'the claim that an action is consistent with its agent's character is a great deal weaker than the claim that it is determined by it' (p. 52), and so that many courses of action may be consistent with the character of an agent who makes his character as he goes along. In the chapter on evil, he argues for a hierarchy of types of good and evil, of such a kind that the higher and highest type of good is only accessible to creatures endowed with the freedom in terms of the libertarian thesis, those which, by their failure, can become responsible for evil of various orders. As Dr Meynell makes clear, the Christian claim is that to the good of the highest order there corresponds no evil of an equivalent order. He concludes by acknowledging the incompleteness of his account, which may, I hope, allow me here to refer to a consideration put forward by St Thomas Aquinas and never, so far as I know, brought into discussions of theodicy today. In the *Summa Theologiae* (1a: 25, 6, in the general context of a discussion of God's power) St Thomas asks whether God could make better the things he has made. Without attempting to analyse the whole finely-balanced article, the short answer here

is that he could; that in fact not only is this not the best of all possible worlds, but that the very concept of a best of all possible (finite, created) worlds is incoherent. It seems to me that this helps to relativize in an appropriate way the problem of God and Evil, ultimately by illuminating the fragility of creaturely existence; at any rate, Christians are not committed to a defence of the view that this is the best of all possible worlds, except in respect of those creaturely goods—Christ's humanity, created beatitude, the Blessed Virgin—which have a kind of infinite worth, derived from God's own infinite goodness (ad. 4).

To return finally to one of my initial doubts. Reassured as I am by Dr Meynell's honest and persuasive account of classical theism, that it is not inconsistent with my experience of God and the world—an 'experience' not merely subjective or religious but at least partly reduced to articulate meaning—I still ask why it is that I don't find classical theism a satisfactory way of sustaining and completing the partial meanings of my experience. I wonder why it is that Barth's contradictions, for instance, so clearly exposed by Dr Meynell, still have a kind of fascination; I hope I am not being simply perverse.

Herbert McCabe has no memory of making the statement attributed to him on page 43.

CORNELIUS ERNST, O.P.

**ATHEISM AND ALIENATION**, by Patrick Masterson. *Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1971. 188 pp. £2.50.*

This book originated, as the author says in his introduction, in a series of lectures for undergraduates studying philosophy. It has both the virtues and vices of its original form. In seven chapters, Dr Masterson outlines the history of a progressive acceptance of atheism among European philosophers from Descartes to Camus. He views this movement of thought sympathetically, in the sense that he recognizes the cogency of the reasons, both philosophical and historical, which underlie it. But he does not wish to be part of it, since—as he tries to show in a final chapter—it is not philosophically necessary or humanly rewarding to do so. There is still, he says, despite Descartes, Kant, Comtian Positivism, Modern Existentialism and the rest, a way of thinking and interpreting experience in which the affirmation of God makes good sense.

Inevitably because of its origins much of the

book consists of summaries of the thought of the various thinkers discussed (see above for the list) together with brief critiques of their inadequacies. The summaries are, on the whole, accurate and useful, though no more so than those to be found in a good many works of this kind. The danger of books like this is that they may encourage students not to read the originals. In a course of lectures, a good deal can be done to ensure that this danger is minimized. When the lectures appear as books the safeguards are removed.

I have two criticisms to make, neither of which should be regarded as damaging to what Dr Masterson says, but only as indicating what seems to me a certain deficiency in the book as it stands. The first is that the ground it covers is too familiar, too academic, and not quite up to date enough. Is it good enough to deal only with the early Marx? I should