

authorship of the gospels is reliable.

It has long been standard orthodoxy in the study of the gospels that the verbal connections between the gospels, in both content and order, are so close that they presuppose either the sharing of written, documentary sources, or at least quasi-written sources, in the nature of a tradition learnt *verbatim* by heart; Wenham opposes this. The extent of the parallels is, however, so great, that it is far easier to show connection than to disprove it. In which direction the influence goes is often a most vexed question, and constitutes the usual battlefield of the synoptic problem: it is a matter of deducing a plausible set of interests and methods in an author to account for changes perceived, and showing that one set of interests and methods provides a better explanation than another. But to say that no such set can be constructed is far harder and more sweeping. Here perhaps Wenham's own courtesy is his worst enemy: he repeatedly makes such gentle claims as 'this does not suggest that Luke is based on the text of Mark' (p. 36), 'it is by no means obvious that there is a literary connection between the two passages' (p. 65). Nor do the statistics so constantly used—'an editorial process involving 5,000 deliberate changes is unconvincing'—carry the weight imposed on them, since each case needs to be argued on its own.

The second pier supporting this edifice is similarly unreliable. With admirable impartiality Wenham quotes authorities on either side exhaustively reviewing their evidence. One more opinion will scarcely settle the matter. To the present reviewer, however, it does seem that a selection is made from a mass of self-contradictory and casual historical assertions by the early Fathers which happens to accord with an author's particular point of view. The ancient writers do not seem to have demanded the rigour of evidence which a modern historian would require before stating or confirming an event as historical. Not all the historical assertions of any author or group of authors among them can be integrated into any convincing picture; a selection must be made. The vital question is what the criterion of selection should be. Should it be an imaginative picture composed by a modern author from a jig-saw puzzle (not to say crazy-paving) of assertions of the early Fathers, or is the only safe criterion the demands of the gospel texts? If the latter, then the evidence of the early Fathers must be treated as strictly posterior to, and only confirmatory of, the conclusions reached from a study of the gospel texts.

Mr Wenham's book is closely and clearly argued, with a mass of detailed evidence. But a preliminary examination does not suggest that his plea will be universally accepted.

HENRY WANSBROUGH

A PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY by J. Deotis Roberts. *SCM Press*, 1991- Pp. x + 182. £9-95.

In introducing this work, the author observes that 'it is written with those in mind who have little or no direct exposure to the study of philosophy, but who will not be able to read widely in theological literature without upgrading their philosophical knowledge' (p. 2).¹ I think it

fair to say that a reader who had been exposed in any depth to the philosophers who are discussed in this volume would indeed do better to consult some other work. This is the inevitable consequence of pressures of space. The attempt to treat the classical and pre-classical authors, the writers of the Middle Ages, and modern, post-Cartesian philosophy in the space of less than two hundred (short) pages is bound in at least certain cases to leave the reader with little more than a name and an assortment of sketchily defined terms.

However, for those with no previous acquaintance with philosophy, this book may indeed meet a need, although not perhaps the need that is suggested by the book's title. The author writes that he 'will first introduce the ideas as they were intended by those who formulated them. We will then be in a position to judge the validity of the appropriation of the philosopher's ideas by a particular theologian. What the philosopher thinks will be carefully critiqued from a theological point of view.' However, I found little evidence of this last activity: the author's concerns are in fact largely expository, and make little explicit reference to theology. I would suggest that the book is better considered not as an introduction to theology, but as an introduction to philosophy with special reference to philosophers whose thinking has helped to shape theological reflection. So for instance, Aquinas and Whitehead are both accorded relatively long discussions (they each receive 4—5 pages). However, even here, the need to be concise means that the book reads rather like a set of lecture notes.

It is clear enough which sections of the book relate to the author's own specialist concerns. He notes for example his interest in liberation theology (p. 4), and this is reflected in the space given to an examination of Marx (about 8 pages), although the theological implications of the philosophy again receive little attention. Here the author is clearly on familiar ground. By contrast, in the earlier chapters, he seems largely to be reliant on texts which are themselves introductions to the history of philosophy (see for instance footnote 1 of Chapter 111, where the author cites Copleston's *History* and other such works).

In sum, this volume will give an impression of what has been done in the name of philosophy over the last two millennia or so, and this impression will be specially relevant to those with an interest in theology. Some may have reservations about this sort of exercise. A serious philosophical conception of the world, of the kind advanced by the figures who are discussed in this study, seems bound to offer resistance to so short a reformulation. If the case were otherwise, one might wonder why these men of acknowledged insight should have devoted so much space to the elaboration of their central beliefs. Moreover, a study of this kind, while it may leave the reader with a grasp of names and dates and a number of technical terms, is unlikely to afford much sense of what it might be like actually to produce a philosophical argument. However, that said, not everyone is fortunate enough to have time to examine a philosophy in detail, and after all one has to start somewhere.

MARK WYNN