

proclaimed structure has not been fully adhered to. Constant comparison within as well as between Parts I and II creates confusion and tedious repetition, and Part III, being little more than repetition and summary, does not seem to achieve its aim of advancing the dialogue.

More fundamental queries arise: it is asserted throughout that the theology of both writers is mystical rather than logical; if that is so how far is it communicable? The divine economy can be experienced in the Church, but can the concept of it be communicated to others? It would seem that you either perceive it for yourself, or you do not, despite this magnificent effort to construct a coherent presentation. For all Zizioulas' stress on the communitarian nature of the Church it would seem that such mystical appreciation remains irredeemably individual, and no Dominican could be expected to endorse the remark "...the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, is for the Church perhaps more crucial than the preaching of the word " (p.290). The inevitably subjective character of a thesis is also a snag. How far should de Lubac and Zizioulas be taken as representative Western and Eastern theologians? How adequate is McPartlan's presentation of their views, and, more significantly, how reliable are the deductions with which he covers the areas they admittedly have not treated of? Zizioulas is clearly his hero, for while frequent reference is made throughout to the limitations of de Lubac's—much more extensive—work, no breath of criticism of Zizioulas appears before the final ten pages. It is surely a good thing that this profound and fascinating study has been published, but it is certainly not bed-side reading.

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THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD by N.T.Wright, SPCK. 1992, Pp. xix + 535. £15.

This book by the Chaplain of Worcester College Oxford is the first of five volumes: a project to write about Jesus and Paul has become a searching enquiry into all the problems relevant to such a task, semantic, epistemological, literary, historical, metaphysical. It is characteristic that no quarter is shown to those who tacitly assume they know what they mean when they write of Jesus or of God, especially when explaining one by the other in the apparent assurance that this other is already known. The author is indeed well aware of the magnitude of his task 'the present project is part of the wider task ... of trying to rethink a basic worldview in the face of the internal collapse of the one which has dominated the Western world for the last two centuries or so.' 'And it is precisely one of the features of the worldview now under attack that "history" and "theology" belong in separate compartments.'

It will be widely accepted today that Judaeo-Christian theology is always expressed, as the author claims, in terms of explicit story. What will come as a shock to many is to read here a fundamentally new way of

understanding 'apocalyptic'. To try to put this in our own words, the gospel story is indeed apocalyptic, revelation, but not in the sense that it includes smaller or greater revelations from and about another world: it is apocalyptic because it is revelatory reading of what is happening before the eyes of contemporaries who do not as yet understand their own situation, charged with God as it is, his purpose, judgment and reconciliation. In comment we may plead that the gospel is also public truth, and in a sense or senses not fully understood but legitimate therefore historical truth; and there are a number of ways in which such truth may be justified and vindicated. It may be difficult to answer but it is no less legitimate to ask, Did this happen?

There are of course other difficulties about the concept of a story: for example a narrator may find himself taken by surprise and not know how to narrate what he lives through. Thus the author of Job recognized that he had 'spoken of great things . . . not understood, things too wonderful for me to know' (42.3).

It is tempting to venture some criticisms from the point of view of New Testament scholarship. To take some examples at random: first, in connexion with Bultmann, there could with advantage be some discussion of his existentialism, a word strangely little mentioned here. Second in connexion with Luke, it is odd to find no mention of the Benedictus (Luke 1. 68-79) as an example in scriptural terms of an early Christian account of what Luke believed had happened ('the events that have happened among us'). Last, the author does not give a satisfactory account of the concept partly hidden in early tradition, but pervasive, of uncleanness in Jewish self-understanding (Acts 10, esp. 28), or of its deep root in the sense of *niddah* (the real problem in *Joseph and Aseneth*).

It must be admitted that the author gives the impression that he would have a ready answer to all such observations; he possesses deep insight into all the primary sources, and has apparently read all that others have written about them. Indeed, to read this book, only the first in a five-volume project, is in itself an education in both biblical studies and in radical contemporary thought. We may close by expressing the hope that in his subsequent studies the author will treat with the same depth and facility a subject only introduced here, the transformation of the story of a people into knowledge of a divine person. Kind author, please note my initials.

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