

bols it can be stripped down until the most ancient stratum is reached. This 'phenomenon of historical seriality' seems to have no more substance than Eliade's non-temporal time, and a certain amount of talk about the spire-tree-phallus series really does not achieve very much. ('If one looks at the phallus in cold blood, the substitution of the cathedral spire is an attempt to disguise something', page 90.) As the author says in the preface the book 'stems from the concern to keep our lines of communication with the centre clear and un tarnished', it is a desire to 'defend ancient springs'. By comparison with the studies in the Lancaster collection it becomes obvious that we are still in the Eliade era here (not that

Eliade is ever mentioned). It is difficult for a theologian to take the book very seriously when he finds the author asserting, on page 2, that Bultmann believes that 'the whole of Christian mythology was an ancient, groping attempt to express the truths put forward by Martin Heidegger'—of whom it is said, by way of explanation presumably, that he is 'a German philosopher who, to boot, eventually joined the Nazi movement'. To boot or not to boot, it little boots but surely that is not the archaic meaning of the word (*OE bót*; of German *buss*e, making good, expiation). It is by such trivia that one's confidence in Professor Munz is sapped.

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S. T. COLERIDGE: LAY SERMONS, edited by R. J. White (Vol. 6 of the Collected Works of S. T. Coleridge). *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, £4.75.

Well! If the poet's prose-style offered notorious difficulties for his contemporaries, there is no reason to expect that time has diminished them. 'Dislocated and perplexed by the parenthetic tangle' commented Carlyle, and Sarah Wedgewood is quoted in the introduction to this edition as saying that the Sermons were 'Full of an affectation of the most sublime and important meaning—and so much unmeaning in reality'. We are told that a James Lowell had the Lay Sermons read to his hens on rainy days, when they were backward with their eggs. 'The effect on them was magical. Whether their consciences were touched, or they wished to escape the preaching, I know not'.

But the complexity of style is only the first of the hurdles for us to surmount if we are to get to the heart of this work. It might just have been possible for someone in the early 19th. century to read the title page without being immediately put off, but it does seem to be specifically designed to repel any 20th. century reader: 'The Statesman's Manual, or: The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight; a Lay Sermon addressed to the Higher Classes of Society'—which had already evoked the response 'humbug' before the death of Coleridge. Even supposing that our interest in him, or even the subject matter, should carry us far enough to continue reading, there is yet another obstacle on the way—and that is the presentation of this superficially attractive edition. For the text is so overloaded with asterisks, letters and numbers, referring to Coleridge's own footnotes, emendations to the text of the original edition, and footnotes to the text and to Coleridge's footnotes respectively, that the actual sermon is often reduced to a thin dribble at the top of the page, in constant danger of being dried up altogether, and which requires heroic determination to be read at all.

Assuming that the effort has been made, is

it all worth-while? I think so, apart from the light which these little-known works shed on Coleridge's political and religious thought, it is amazing how much the picture he paints, and the future he fears, resemble the England we all know and hate. For example, on page 189, this is to be found: 'We are a busy, enterprising and commercial nation. The habits attached to this character must, if there exist no adequate counterpoise, inevitably lead us, under the specious names of utility, practical knowledge and so forth, to look at all things through the medium of the market, and to estimate the worth of all pursuits and attainments by their marketable value'. And it is at once apparent how, even though his idiosyncrasy often slips into mere eccentricity, his thought can cut through the usual categories the ideology; a trait which alienated him from his contemporaries, but which we, in our detachment from his age, can be grateful for. He shared with the radicals of his day their critique of society, with regard generally to the spiritual effects of capitalism, and in particular to the issues of slavery and child labour. But he abhorred their solutions as a threat to individual liberty. Instead, he offers three things which are surely closer to the hearts of the Monday Club than to those with whom his name has been linked in John Cornwell's recent book, 'Coleridge, Poet and Revolutionary'; for his 'counterpoises' to the spiritual decay of his time are these: (1) A feeling for ancient birth, and respect paid to it by the community at large. (2) A genuine intellectual philosophy with an accredited learned and philosophical class. (3) Religion. It is in this ultra-reactionary programme that we can see the shadow of the man who is the real hero of the work, who indeed makes a more frequent appearance. It is not Jesus Christ, but Plato.

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