

an extension of the modern mind, obsessed with our infatuations—'salvation history'—and all the rest of it. Literary explanations are minimized in any observation of differences between one evangelist and another. Every detail is pounced on as pregnant with theological significance. And the critic has a kind of snobbery that assumes that the evangelist must have a unified system of thought and clear logical pattern in regard to all his problems. One feels that a little more commonsense and common experience would have suggested

that writers in the first century, or indeed any century, do not work on the rigid mental lines of their commentators. More account could be made of the very obvious fact that at least two of the evangelists are repeating what had been said before. The sources are used to prove the differences between the evangelists, but they also prove their similarity. Some explanation of this patent fact is called for. Perhaps some scholars fail by their very intensity and closeness to the objects of their study to see wood instead of trees. AELRED BAKER, O.S.B.

BORDERLANDS OF THEOLOGY AND OTHER ESSAYS, by D. M. MacKinnon. *Lutterworth Press*, 1968. 35s.

This book is divided into three parts, consisting of papers on theology and philosophy of religion, on ethics, politics and philosophy of history, and on metaphysics and epistemology. One is immediately astonished by the author's erudition and range; but even more impressive is the constantly questioning temper of his mind, and his steadfast refusal of easy solutions, whether 'conservative' or 'radical', to philosophical and theological problems. To be a pupil of Professor MacKinnon's is to be deprived of the insidious luxury of belonging to a school.

The section on theology is dominated by the insistence that Christian belief commits one to assent to propositions about matters of fact; that it cannot be reduced to a mere outlook on life, whether couched in idealist or existentialist terms, without becoming false to itself. This is why, as the author says in the essay on Christology, the decline of the idealist tradition in philosophy, though superficially it made the intellectual climate so much more inimical to Christian belief, was in many ways more healthy for it. It became much clearer that Christian faith entailed belief that something was actually the case about the world. When Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, he was stating something that he believed to be the case independently of his statement of it; he was not *making* Jesus the Messiah in the act of hailing him as such. Whatever be the defects of logical positivism, Professor MacKinnon is surely right that its concern with verification, with validation of theory by facts which happen to be the case but might not have been the case, is something which is neglected by theologians

to their peril. Sure enough, belief in the Resurrection has implications for Christian life here and now, but its meaning is not exhausted in these implications, since it essentially involves a historical claim; and if this claim is false, Christians will have believed in vain.

To judge by the writings of many modern moral philosophers, you can engage either in moral philosophy, or in inquiry into real moral problems, but never in any circumstances into both at once. Professor MacKinnon's writings are unusual for the manner in which they marshal technical ethical arguments for the confrontation of serious moral issues. There is a devastating treatment here of the palliatives with which Christians are inclined to quieten their consciences, and are abetted in doing so by the moral theologians, on the issues of politics and war. The advocacy of Collingwood, perhaps the most under-rated of first-rank twentieth-century philosophers, will perhaps persuade more people to read his work.

The last section is closely concerned, in its discussion of Professor Wisdom and the work of Strawson on Kant, with the limits of intelligible discourse, and the bearing of these on the work of the theologian. There are some tantalising hints, here and in the rest of the book, on the relation of metaphysics to poetry and other literature, which I hope Professor MacKinnon will expand on some later occasion.

It is impossible to summarize adequately a book which is so wide-ranging and sceptical (in the deepest sense). It may perhaps convey to those not fortunate enough to have been his pupils Professor MacKinnon's qualities as a teacher. HUGO MEYNELL

THE PRIVILEGE OF MAN, by Kenneth Cragg. *Athlone Press*, 1968. 208 + xii pp. 42s. net.

Hitherto Mr Kenneth Cragg has mainly concerned himself with Muslim-Christian dialogue; and he has done much to make Islam more

comprehensible to Christians. But in every book he has written his meaning has been obfuscated by what seems to be the very