

Among the more pleasant fringe-benefits of editing a journal of this kind are the letters you get from readers which lead sometimes to lengthy and interesting exchanges. Some are critical and some complimentary (frequently about the same topic) but most contain useful suggestions. Unfortunately in a journal like ours for which the material (apart from this page) has to be at the printers six weeks before the date of publication, it doesn't seem practical to have a correspondence section. If you write immediately about something that has appeared, say, in August, your comments will not appear in print until at least October. If, however, enough readers tell me they are prepared to put up with this kind of delay, I would be happy to think again about the matter. It is not to be expected that all our readers will like or agree with all that we publish (the editor himself likes it all but doesn't always agree with it) and it would obviously be a good thing to provide if possible for a critical feed-back.

One reader wrote the other day to say that perhaps he had misunderstood the purpose of *New Blackfriars*; what he expected, he said, was a theology review but here was this journal with articles on Steinbeck and John Fowles. 'As a busy P.P.', he said, 'I cannot find time for specialist studies. Stanley Hauerwas and the Women's Lib. articles were useful, but Mann on the Hermeneutical Labyrinth went right over my head.' (It was with some trepidation that it occurred to me that just after posting his letter he would have received last month's issue with Bernard Sharratt on Foucault.)

This very courteous and helpful correspondent raises two questions about the policy and purposes of *New Blackfriars* which are really, I think, questions about theology itself. It seems worth while trying to deal with them publicly. There is the question raised by the literary and other 'non-theological' articles and the one raised by the difficult and technical articles. *New Blackfriars* is indeed meant to be a journal of theology, as is to be expected of one published by the Order of Preachers, but we think that for this very reason such articles have their place in it. It would be a bad thing if either of them took up too much of our space, if we became either a literary magazine or a specialized theological periodical, but if we are to do our job we cannot avoid overlapping with both of these. We are a 'cross-cultural journal' not simply because we hope to appeal to a number of different kinds of people or because we write solely for the man of wide and varied interests, but because we think that theology itself is of its nature cross-cultural.

We are, after all, a journal of *Christian* theology, which means that the Theos with whom we are concerned is to be found in and through the man Jesus Christ. Christianity is about the fact that it

is in man that we find God and in Jesus that we find man. This means that whatever gives us some insight into the mystery of man, whether it be the work of poets or anthropologists, scientists, philosophers or historians, makes its contribution to our theology. We see it as our job to try to indicate how such contribution might be made. Theologians must, of course, spend a good deal of time talking to each other, and the specialized theological journal exists for this purpose. But while there is a place for the journal exclusively devoted to this dialogue, there is no place for the theologian exclusively devoted to it. His work would surely become abstract, irrelevant to whole areas of human experience and in the end trivial; it would degenerate into what we have come to call scholasticism. It would suffer, in fact, the fate which many believe overtook the last generation of English philosophers. Now *New Blackfriars* aims to be a journal of theology, not in the exclusive sense of a channel of communication between theologians as such, but in the sense of a journal for those in any way concerned with theology—and every educated Christian is in some way concerned with theology—a journal in which the links between many kinds of experience can be made in the light of the gospel.

Inevitably there will be a certain amount of theological in-talk, and this is our excuse for the occasional article which will appeal only to a minority of our readers, but there must also be a good deal of theological out-talk which accounts for the articles which might well find their place in secular cultural journals. Between these we try to maintain a majority of articles which will help people directly to make greater sense of their faith at a time when old and new formulations are jostling each other in what, to many, is a rather confusing way.

Christian theology can never be simply a matter of theorizing and the correspondent I have mentioned drew attention with particular approval to the article by Julius Nyerere last November on poverty, Christianity and revolution which he rightly saw as a piece of theology. He would like more of this kind of thing, he would like us to examine the 'relationship to Helder Camara at one end and Camilo Torres at the other'. Nothing would please us better, though there are those who feel that the political and social aspects of theology have been over-exposed in *New Blackfriars* and others who dislike what they see as our left-wing bias—though not always providing the obvious corrective in the form of contributions from another point of view.

In the end, though, the case for what we are trying to do in *New Blackfriars* (how far we are succeeding is another matter) rests on the claim to be neither eclectic nor dilettante but catholic—and this does seem appropriate in a Catholic theological review.

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