

quest for survival, then we can have no confidence in the belief that they represent truths arrived at by reflection on the nature of reality.

The philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe who died in January was a leading associate of Wittgenstein, sometime Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge and an uncompromising advocate of Catholic orthodoxy. Famously in 1948 she debated with C.S. Lewis the question whether if our thought processes were the result of neurophysiological causes they could yet be rational. The denial of this was the main platform of Lewis's Christian apologetics in his widely read book *Miracles*. Anscombe countered that causes and reasons are not the same, and that whether an inference is justified is independent of the issue of what brought it about. The fact remains, however, that if someone could show that what you believe, including everything of religious and philosophical significance, is entirely explicable as the expression of a genetic survival strategy, then there really is a question whether it is rational to suppose as before that one believes it because there is good reason to do so.

When Gould considers religious challenges to science he typically cites Biblical fundamentalists of the sort who seek to have US schools teach 'creation science', including the hypothesis that the world is but a few thousand years old. These people are as ignorant of the relationship between Scripture and tradition as they are of the canons of scientific enquiry. But in taking them as examples of those opposed to irenic reconciliation Gould has chosen to battle with straw men, and he leaves untouched the really serious questions of whether mainstream, orthodox Christianity, Judaism or Islam can be maintained with reasonable good faith by anyone who accepts at face value the claims of socio-biology.

It is held throughout this lively and easy read that when scientists pronounce on matters moral (and Gould tends to equate religion with morality) they overstep their magisterium. But that misses the point. The most profound 'scientific' challenge to morals and meaning comes not from those scientists who agree about these matters, but from those who contend that all thought is but the vapour given off by biochemistry as genes jostle for survival. C.S. Lewis was on to a truth, even if his presentation was flawed. Science has its apologists; religion is in desperate need of its advocates or defenders.

JOHN HALDANE

CARDINAL RATZINGER. THE VATICAN'S ENFORCER OF THE FAITH
by John L. Allen Jr. *Continuum International Publishing, New York and London, 2000. Pp. xii+340, £16.99 hbk.*

The author of this book contacted me some while before its publication to seek a 'telephone interview'. He was writing a life of Cardinal Ratzinger, so perhaps, as one who had gone into print at book-length on the topic of Ratzinger's theology, I could be of assistance. One likes to be helpful when one can. But I somehow felt that a staff member of the *National Catholic Reporter*—an abrasive American weekly with a splenetically anti-Roman editorial stance—might not be the best person to write a balanced

biography of this particular figure. Having now read the book, I can vouchsafe that Mr Allen is an honest soul, who has not let his progressivist agenda blind him to the virtues of his subject. But the theological strengths of positions Ratzinger has espoused (both as Prefect and as a private doctor) are rarely if ever done justice. Instead, the central chapters of this book—on liberation theology, feminism, homosexuality, ecumenism and the omnium-gatherum of dissent at large—conclude that, by his policies, Ratzinger has 'contributed to making the world a more fractured, and therefore a more dangerous place'. After the passing of so damaging a statement, the reader can be forgiven for bafflement at the author's high estimate of not only Ratzinger's 'sincerity' but also his 'penetration'. Reading this book, which at once lambastes Ratzinger as a contributor to the oppression of the poor, women and homosexuals and acknowledges the likely merits of a (highly hypothetical) Ratzinger papacy is, I found, a disturbingly schizophrenic experience.

What is going on? Having no comprehensive principles of judgment (his explanation of his own adherence to Catholicism, while clearly heartfelt, is distressingly banal), the author slides from one set of criteria of evaluation, interior to Catholicism, to another set, this time of a secular ameliorist nature more at home in a *Guardian* editorial.

The present reviewer's interest in Ratzinger focuses on his work as an historical and dogmatic theologian—though naturally his official policy interventions are of importance for any Catholic Christian. If one seeks to understand how Ratzinger personally views those interventions (which at one level are simply the reaffirmation of common doctrine) it is clearly insufficient to view them simply as Church politics or 'culture wars'. Here theological journalism, the chronicling of various *causes célèbres*, however competently done, is not enough. The investigation must go deeper. In nearly fifty pages of Allen's writing on liberation theology, for example, there is no evidence of insight into the chief ground of Ratzinger's objections to liberation theology. These do not concern in the first place the congruence with Catholic social teaching of the political options such theology most typically advocates but the way the political enters into theology there not as a *corollary* of soteriology (unproblematic for Ratzinger) but as soteriology's *translation*. That is far more *ad rem* than what the young professor may or may not have thought of Danny Cohn-Bendit.

Cardinal Ratzinger includes some good original research on the wartime history of the corner of Bavaria where its subject grew up. One can legitimately hold a more jaundiced view of German Catholicism's record under the Third Reich than is found in the Cardinal's retrospective musings. But surely not even the strictest evangelical morality would hold that the father and breadwinner of a young family has an *obligation* to surrender life or liberty by way of protest against an infamous regime.

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