

get any serious sense of what Aquinas is saying about anything.

So this book is much to be recommended. At £7.99 and \$12.95 it is a very good bargain indeed and it should prove invaluable to students and teachers looking for a solid introduction to Aquinas as a philosopher in the words of the man himself. I should add that the translations found in it are reliable and that it comes with a helpful and attractively written Introduction which is appropriately geared to the general reader rather than to the specialist.

BRIAN DAVIES OP

THE THEOLOGY OF THE LATER PAULINE LETTERS by Andrew T. Lincoln and A.J.M Wedderburn. *Cambridge University Press*. 1993. Pp. xi + 185. £27.95 H/b. £9.95 P/b.

A growing dissatisfaction with the theological treatment of individual New Testament writings in New Testament introductions and commentaries has prompted the Cambridge New Testament Theology series, under the editorship Of Professor James Dunn. This latest, and welcome addition to the series, despite its potentially misleading title, confines itself to a discussion of Colossians (Wedderburn) and Ephesians (Lincoln).

Both halves of the book follow a similar pattern. A discussion of the background to each letter prepares the way for a consideration of its theology. There follows a discussion of its canonical context within the New Testament, while the final section attempts the often-neglected task of critical theological engagement.

Wedderburn adopts a fairly traditional historical-critical approach to Colossians, placing great importance on the background to the letter, and specifically the Colossian 'heresy', for understanding its theology. He avoids the pitfall of many in refusing too precise a definition of the "false teachers", though his preferred background of Hellenistic Judaism is perhaps rather vague. The author too, he sets against this background, which provides the provenance both of the christological hymn of 1:15–20 and of the *Haustafel* of 3:18–4:1.

The bulk of his chapter on the theology of Colossians concerns this christological hymn, but there are useful, if brief, discussions of its eschatology, and the relationship between its theology and its ethical teaching. His discussion of the hymn's christology reminds us of the need to take seriously the author's adaptation of the existing hymn for his or her own purposes; its originally cosmic nature has been considerably narrowed in its final form, both by reference to the cross of Jesus, and to humanity, rather than the cosmos, as the focus of reconciliation.

Finally, Wedderburn offers a useful concluding chapter on the contemporary theological implications of Colossians, noting, for example, the relevance of its cosmic christology in an age concerned with the 'integrity of creation', though fully aware of the problems involved in ascribing the role played in creation by God's Wisdom to a human being who lived millions of years after even this planet came into being. The limited scope of his task, however, means he can often do no more than provide pointers for future critical engagement. What he does do is invite

his readers to engage in the same task which occupied the author of Colossians, creatively refashioning various traditions to provide a Christian reflection on the needs of the present day.

Lincoln is stronger than Wedderburn in laying his methodological cards on the table. He begins by addressing the question of where the 'theology' of a letter is to be found, locating it not in the letter's explicitly doctrinal statements, but in the "symbolic universe" or "world of meaning" which its author constructs.

He also avoids some of the pitfalls of the historical-critical approach by opting for a literary and rhetorical-critical analysis of Ephesians, isolating the setting of its implied readers and the symbolic world which the implied author seeks to create for them, against which key theological themes are then considered. His examination of the letter's rhetoric, and its expected effects on the implied readers, is especially noteworthy.

A valuable discussion follows of how and why Ephesians has developed and reinterpreted Paul's thought. One significant example, as Lincoln points out in relation to the 'new perspective' on Paul (represented by Sanders et al.), is that the traditional Lutheran battle-cry of 'justification by faith' may actually have a New Testament antecedent: not (as Sanders has shown) in Galatians and Romans, which deal specifically with "works of the law", but in Ephesians, which has already given Paul's justification language a more universal application.

Finally, Lincoln attempts to engage critically with the epistle's distinctive theology. He considers the potential of the language of worship and of story (both an important part of the argument of Ephesians) for contemporary theology. He also discusses the possible appropriation of the theme of personal and ecclesial identity and calling, with reference to modern developmental theory, and offers a convincing way in which Ephesians' language of 'spheres of power' might be appropriated. Further, he provides some concrete examples of how Ephesians might challenge the theological agendas of contemporary Christians, both Protestant and Catholic. In short, he provides a good deal of food for theological thought.

Both sections of this book offer many thought-provoking insights which repay careful study. There are, naturally, occasional weaknesses. For example, Wedderburn's section would have been enhanced by paralleling Lincoln's brief introduction, rather than launching almost immediately into the vexed question of the Colossian 'heresy'. On the question of this 'heresy', I was surprised that Wedderburn allows little room among the alternatives he discusses for the theory that the false teachers may have been Jewish mystics of the *merkabah* variety. Lincoln for his part has little to say about Ephesians' use of the symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple and cult.

The main weakness of the book, however, lies in a lack of overall cohesion: the general impression one gains is of two books sharing the same cover. One might have hoped for an introductory section allowing the two authors to reflect on the wider implications of their task. The question which this whole series raises is where the 'theology' of a particular book is to be found: is it coextensive with the book's argument? Lincoln does address the question explicitly in his introduction. Wedderburn implicitly in his discussion of the Colossians hymn; yet an overall discussion of the

question is called for.

This having been said, Wedderburn and Lincoln have provided introductions to Colossians and Ephesians which are both accessible and immensely stimulating. Not least, they offer a challenge to students of the New Testament to engage afresh in the difficult but necessary theological task.

IAN BOXALL

KNOWING JESUS, by James Allison, OP. S.P.C.K. 1993. pp.vii-116, £7.99.

After a foreword by Rowan Williams, and a brief introduction the book has a simple structure of four chapters. *The Resurrection*, *The Intelligence of the Victim*, *A Framework for Knowing*, *Suggestions for Further Reading* and an index. Treatment of a more perceptive and vital understanding of the significance of the resurrection of Christ leads on to a discussion of how the apostles eventually came to share Jesus' self-understanding of his role as a conscious and willing victim. Consideration of the universal relevance of this "victim intelligence" then opens up reflection on how this produces a totally new way of knowing Christ.

The simplicity and incredibly fresh and vivid style result both from the fact that the material was originally given as lectures by a superb teacher, and from the immediacy of the writer's experience of the victim point of view in various parts of the third world.

His thesis is that the resurrection transformed the apostles' understanding of Jesus' life and teaching not by a sort of *post factum* vindication, but by making present for ever the crucified-and-risen victim Son of God—a significance only gradually comprehended in the light of Pentecost and their own subsequent reflection, but which is now fully inscribed in all the New Testament records (not just the Gospels) of Jesus' life and teaching as well as his passion and death. This significance Alison calls the "victim intelligence" (we might more naturally say the victim's understanding or perception of the real situation) whereby willing participation in the one supreme sacrifice according to God's will not only expresses love and obedience, but provides the interpretative key to the whole of Jesus' work. This transforms (Alison's favourite word is *looses*) all modes of relationship thereafter—with God, and among human beings.

The point is that willing victimhood forever challenges all relationships which are exclusive, in which people define themselves over against something or someone else. And the reason is that the resurrection reveals with blinding clarity the pure gratuitousness of being, of life, and of all other gifts that follow. So, since all is given by God, there is no need, and no ground for clinging, for defending personal securities or for appropriating areas of existence for self-identity. Alison's further contention is that this form of knowledge of God is not the result of intimate and personal spiritual experience (though these may occur as gratuitous extras) but is made available to all, in the Church and in the sacraments. The most obvious demonstration of how such willing