

CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL THEOLOGIANS by S. Paul Schilling. pp. 288. *S.C.M. Press, London*, 1965. 35s.

THEOLOGY AND PROCLAMATION, by Gerhard Ebeling. Translated from the German by John Riches. pp. 187. *Collins, London*, 1966. 28s.

Dr Schilling, professor of systematic theology at the Boston University school of theology, has produced a valuable and sympathetic study of eleven contemporary European theologians. With admirable fairness he presents their views and adds some critical comments. The values and difficulties of these various theological positions are assessed in terms of three criteria: internal consistency, faithfulness to the biblical witness and relevance to secular knowledge. He deals first with three 'theologians of the Word of God' (Karl Barth, Hermann Diem and Josef Hromádka), then a group of 'theologians of existence' (Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten and Gerhard Ebeling) and two representative 'neo-Lutheran theologians' (Edmund Schlink and Gustaf Wingren). Yves Congar and Karl Rahner are taken as examples of contemporary Roman Catholic theologians and Nikos Nissiotis as an Eastern Orthodox thinker who is addressing the West. Finally an attempt is made to set these current movements in perspective and plot the 'converging and diverging paths' of the theologies in question.

In a work of this scope there are inevitably incidental slips. Heinrich Schlier and Rudolf Schnackenburg might be surprised to find themselves referred to among the 'Catholic systematians' (p. 11). In 'traditional theology' uncreated grace is not the same as prevenient grace, nor is created grace the same as actualized grace (p. 213).

But all in all, the book is a credit to Dr Schilling's careful research and the open-mindedness of the contemporary American theological scene. Here is a willingness to listen and learn which, however, does not deteriorate into gullibility. Schilling has many honest, substantial difficulties to put. With reference to Barth's rejection of natural theology he asks whether in fact – on the very grounds of Barth's

own incarnational premises – there is such a thing 'as the "natural man"', in the sense of a man left wholly to his unaided intellectual and spiritual resources' (p. 37). He draws attention to the peril of Bultmann's insistence on God as *pro me*: 'a God who is chiefly *pro me* is even more likely to be treated as an object at man's disposal, subject to human manipulation, than is the God who is regarded as objective to man because his existence and character are independent of man'. Bultmann's intention is to insist that man cannot and should not treat God as an object subject to his disposal, but the result of his views could be to confirm human self-centredness, not to curb it (p. 99).

It would be unreasonable to quarrel with Dr Schilling over the selection he has made of the theologians to be discussed in his book. With most of them the choice was automatic. However, the claim made on the dust-jacket that these 'eleven Europeans . . . are struggling with the living issues of Christian theology in the 1960s' is misleading. It is hardly true, for example, of Barth, Bultmann and Gogarten. Their influence and significance remain, but the struggle has passed to such younger men as Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, J. B. Metz, Eberhard Jüngel, Joseph Ratzinger and Heinrich Ott.

In *Theology and Proclamation* Professor Ebeling begins by examining the tension between scientific theology and church proclamation – a problem which we encounter above all in the duality of 'historical' and 'dogmatic' theory. The key section of the book, 'Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', is a constructive discussion of the ideas of Bultmann on this subject. Chapters on Christology and ecclesiology conclude the work.

Bultmann's view is that any attempt to get behind the kerygma is illegitimate. This would

mean seeking to substitute the results of historical investigation for our faith which is called into existence by the proclamation. Ebeling renounces, of course, the attempt to 'prove' faith by research into the historical Jesus. But he feels that Bultmann's position could turn out to be a dangerous over-simplification. 'The mere fact that the kerygma speaks of Jesus imposes a strong obligation on the theologian to take this speech about a historical person seriously by making an enquiry into his personal history.' We are inescapably bound to an historical way of thought; theologians, like others, must meet this obligation conscientiously 'by taking historical phenomena seriously as historical' (62). Moreover, the kerygma strengthens this obligation when it 'insists on the indispensable importance' of Jesus' person (64); it 'names Jesus as its criterion'. Hence if 'the difference between Jesus and the kerygma should turn out to be . . . a startling mis-interpretation of Jesus, or if it turned out that

although the kerygma uses the name of Jesus it completely misses the point, then the kerygma would have cancelled itself out as a self-contradiction' (65). In fact historical criticism has shown that 'the figure of Jesus does not appear in an arbitrary disguise in the christological kerygma, for the kerygma makes explicit that which was implicit in his person, i.e. in his appearance and preaching' (71).

For his work as a theologian Ebeling is admirably equipped. His judgement is sensitive; he has an expert knowledge of the history of dogmatic theology; he moves easily in the complex world of biblical criticism. His lectures are elegant and exciting. It is precisely the thought of his rich gifts which gives a special poignancy to the commonly-expressed fear, viz. that Ebeling will remain merely the brilliant theological essayist that he shows himself to be in *Theology and Proclamation*.

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MYTH AND SYMBOL. Ed. F. W. Dillistone. *SPCK* 1966 (*Theological Collections* 7). pp.viii+112 16s.6d.

Despite the editor's attempt in the introduction and conclusion to make a meaningful pattern of the seven essays in this collection, they are really too disparate for the book to succeed. Myth and symbol are notoriously ambiguous concepts which this volume does little to clarify. Though the realm of the symbolic is of interest for reasons other than those involved in the demythologizing debate, surely this should be the area illuminated in a 'theological collection' published at a time when even in this country the fundamental problematic of translating the gospel occupies so much of the theological scene.

In themselves, however, most of the essays are worthwhile. Those of Tillich, Mircea Eliade and Professor Ian Ramsey are useful reminders of their authors' respective positions in their longer works. David Cox's contribution *Psychology and Symbolism* argues the psyche's need of symbols to bring together its conscious and unconscious sides and suggests how the christian symbols effect this reconciliation. But both this paper and Michael Stancliffe's *Symbolism and Preaching*, with its sermon on the symbolism of the cave, are overmuch concerned with whether this or that individual christian symbol will work rather than with whether christianity as such can fulfil the integrating role of the symbol for our generation. The editor's own essay is a summary of the views of Rudolf Otto, Cassirer, Susan Langer and Tillich and suggests the complex roots of the symbolic in

human life.

I found the most stimulating contribution that of Antony Bridge, *The Life and Death of Symbols*, where the discussion is situated within the context of contemporary culture. Mr Bridge argues for a rejection both of the fundamentalism which equates the material (or Biblical verbal or credal) symbols with reality, kills them as symbols and idolatrously enthrones them as realities in themselves and of the liberal humanism which on a priori grounds denies any possible underlying reality to the material symbols. Let myth be myth. In the gospels as in non-naturalistic art style is synonymous with meaning: there is no reality to which one can penetrate independently of the art form. The reappraisal of the primitives in their own right and not as pale strivers for renaissance naturalism, the achievement of Pinter and Fellini and Picasso, the interest in the art and poetry of Zen, the feeling for the abstract poem and structure, all at least leave the way open for a renewed appreciation of the gospels which will take them as they are, accepts them as cool media where the spectator is required to become artist in the supplying of the connections. But in our present situation this demands considerable sensitivity on the part of performers and critics within the church not to render such involvement impossible by misinterpreting to others the nature of the game.

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