

life' in which 'telegrams and anger count' and 'personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there'. Lady Oppenheimer brings the private and public together in her theological enterprise.

Taking us out of tiresome talk of 'I-Thou', Lady Oppenheimer delicately articulates love as a way of immanence in more than one situation. We discover ourselves through our mattering in a complexity of inter-relationships. 'I participate, therefore I am'. And so I can find myself taking others seriously, admitting that they matter to themselves and others. Each member of this unity-in-plurality is 'a kind of living point of view' within the community. And God in these terms is the 'being for whom all points of view are assembled'. He has a life of his own' which is also characterised by unity-in-plurality) and is thus able to take part in personal relationships with us.

But if we think 'in fully personal terms' of the divine and 'make use of all the insights which a personal rather than a legal morality promises to yield', how are we to be sure that we are fully responsible persons within the relationship? Perhaps the graceful decision, says Lady Oppenheimer in a favourite simile, is arrived at in the way of complementarity which characterises joint decisions of husband and wife. Far from suffering the loss of freedom, each is, she suggests, more freely personal than before. So it may be that we

should expect the relationship of grace and the attendant decisions, since all is begun by one who is infinite, to be a process within which we find infinite freedom ourselves.

In such a public world as Forster describes some Christians have made efforts to establish the personal values in ways which Lady Oppenheimer cannot approve. 'The currently fashionable way of characterising the significance of Christ does not say much about God's grace. It calls Jesus of Nazareth the 'man for others' in that through his whole life, teaching and death he stood for the unique and ultimate value of self-giving love'. This is not enough. Lady Oppenheimer follows Dr David Jenkins in wanting to speak of Christ as the location of grace. But how is such a locating of grace possible? How is the creative to be set in harmony with the redeeming presence of the divine?

Lady Oppenheimer makes a deal of the old doctrine of 'pre-existence' towards the end of her book. But she rather rushes things here. We believe in 'the Word made flesh' not, as she says, 'in Christ's pre-existent divinity', despite the oddity of Jude among New Testament witnesses. We may hope that Lady Oppenheimer will not content herself with what she has managed here. She should suffer gracefully the charge that one who has written so well on Immanence has not said enough on Incarnation.

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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, by Jeremiah Newman. *Talbot Press*, Dublin, 1972. 242 pp. No price given.

Maybe there's a Maynooth school of clerical sociology. Reading this book—lectures given at Maynooth and elsewhere by the President of Maynooth—is like having your moral tutor along. Not overbearing particularly, but firmly keeping you on the right track. Thus he says Durkheim allows no place for human rights and the human soul; there is a danger in many fields of Marxist innuendo; divorce laws are increasingly invoked by the selfish and lax; and so on.

He has a real problem of course. While obviously sociology does not concern itself with the truth or otherwise of the supernatural, by looking at things in a relative sort of way (i.e. precisely as social phenomena) sociology does tend to reduce the special claims of all world views to equality. This applies not just to Christianity, but to any world view, whether religious, Marxist, or that of Western rationality. It is this threat of relativism which seems to lie behind Dr Newman's book. It's a real threat and there are real arguments going on (not least within sociology) about relativity and

reductionism, about whether Durkheim (or Marx for that matter) adequately accounts for the way people experience things. But the way to discuss these matters is not to use sociology as a kind of background for expounding your privileged moral philosophy. Or at least the exposition should not be presented as an introduction to sociology.

Part of the trouble is the amount of ground covered by Dr Newman. Under neatly subdivided headings, the 24 pages of the opening chapter on the origin and development of sociology whip the reader through 65 characters (and this excludes those mentioned in the footnotes). Naturally there is hardly getting to the bottom of any of them. So one turns to the chapter on political sociology hoping that some of them will turn up again, or that there will be a discussion of how power is exercised or perceived or attributed, or maybe something about conflict or opposing interests. Instead what one finds is basically a collection of definitions of such things as forms of government with examples and the kindly advice

that established government should not be disturbed in the interests of an unreasonable desire for self government on the part of a national minority.

All this gives a sense of superficiality. Take two examples from the same page. When considering the effect of migration on population, Dr Newman informs us that 'until the advent of interplanetary migration it cannot be a factor from the global point of view'. Assuming he can't be saying migration is never international, is he telling us that population studies are at present confined to the earth? Or is he lightening the text with a space age joke? Two paragraphs along he tells us that the chief cause of declining population is moral decay—'practices such as homosexuality, artificial birth control, divorce and infidelity, and all sorts of selfish habits which cause avoidance of marriage or the birth of children'.

Some of this is just prejudice. In the chapter on the sociology of the family we learn that the American Womens Liberation movement is 'suspect of tendencies in the direction of lesbianism'. (No evidence given—so there's a bit

of innuendo if you like.) The woman's position is basically in the home. Man is more fitted for leadership. She is 'more often than not unequal in powers of management. He is stronger, less emotional, more rational. Hence the wife, within reason, should be subject to the husband'.

There is no point in multiplying instances. Dr Newman is sometimes shrewd enough and it is not only conservatives who tell you what to think or rely mainly on assertion—and any analysis is from a particular point of view and generally contains some moralising. Occasionally here there's the interest of a specifically Irish problem being considered—bilingualism in Ireland for instance. And in what other sociology book could you read that 'the wife is Queen in the truly Christian home'.

Still in the end one can only hope that the students who listened to these lectures were as irritated as this particular sociology student who read them, and that they were driven by their irritation to read some of the sociology Dr Newman's schoolbook so inadequately refers to.

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THE THEORY OF MYTH, edited by Adrian Cunningham. *Sheed & Ward*. £4.75.

WHEN THE GOLDEN BOUGH BREAKS. by Peter Munz. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*. £2.25.

Christian theologians and exegetes, as Adrian Cunningham points out in the introduction to this set of six papers on the theory of myth, have been slow to make use of the resources and findings of the current debate on the subject. This collection is the first in a series from the semi-annual colloquia organised by the Department of Religious Studies, University of Lancaster. The two most immediately impressive papers are the devastating exposure of Mircea Eliade by Ivan Strenski and the equally penetrating attack upon Claude Lévi-Strauss by Caroline Hubbard. When the giants in the field are so ruthlessly and plausibly cut down to size the outsider might well decide to put off getting involved until the smoke has cleared from the arena. Only the trouble is that the theologian is not really an outsider here. One of the main tributaries in the current debate is the study of stories (Vladimir Propp is the precursor), and if the Christian theologian is understandably wary of being categorised simply as a student of *myth* he cannot deny that his principal object of study is a *story*. That theologians are beginning to remember this, and perhaps to ask themselves questions about the consequences of it, comes out in a recent issue of *Concilium* (May, 1973).

In the Lancaster collection Tim Moore provides a brief introductory survey of the state of play in the analysis of narrative and outlines

how the 'science of stories' might develop as a relatively independent discipline. He mentions 'the stimulating and magisterial work now being done in the infancy of this new discipline' and refers to the *Mythologiques* of Lévi-Strauss, but it is obvious that we have a set of stories much nearer home than these remote and exotic American Indian myths—indeed we have more than one set of stories—and the time is surely coming when we must begin to practise some analysis upon our own familiar myths. As far as Christian literature is concerned, perhaps the way will be led by *Le récit évangélique* by Claude Chabrol and Louis Marin, in the press at the time of writing. It promises to give rise to questions of theory in the field of biblical exegesis as well as in that of semiotics (which, drawing more upon de Saussure than upon Propp, and inspired by the researches of Roland Barthes, A. J. Greimas and Tzvetan Todorov, has already produced a fair crop of theological work in France).

One of the toughest theoretical problems is, of course, the relevance of questions of truth and falsehood to myth and story, as John Creed points out at the end of his study of the uses of ancient Greek mythology in the emerging 'science of stories'. Another complication is the relationship between myth and ideology, as Adrian Cunningham brings out in