

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM by John Macquarrie. *S.C.M.*; 40s.

The author's departure four years ago to teach in the United States was a considerable loss to British theology. Whatever one's personal attitude to existentialism, it surely seems valuable that continental work should be represented, critically and creatively, in theological teaching in this country, and one had in any case begun to look to Glasgow as a possible focus for the sort of radical revision in philosophical anthropology which the sceptical conservatism of the philosophical establishment makes practically impossible. John Macmurray's Gifford lectures were being delivered in Glasgow in 1953-54, and it is no coincidence that R. D. Laing was back in Glasgow at that period: the relation between the prolegomena in *The Divided Self* and the whole argument of *The Form of the Personal* is obvious. Ronald Gregor Smith, who originally introduced Buber's *I and Thou* into this country, is of course still in Glasgow and still making continental ideas accessible; but it was already a sign of the times and ideogram of our cultural situation that John Macquarrie's English version of *Sein und Zeit*, in collaboration with Edward Robinson, though made in Glasgow, was actually paid for by grants from the University of Kansas. It took thirty-five years and a couple of Scottish theologians to get the major classic of modern European philosophy into English, and by far the most capable appreciation of the job was provided by Professor Torrance of Edinburgh in *The Journal of Theological Studies* (October 1964). While it is possible that no radical reinterpretation of human nature seems necessary from the security of Oxford, the rest of us are becoming accustomed to explore ourselves in the language of (say) Marx and Freud, Giacometti and Beckett, and the pressure to work out a new self-understanding is exigent. That the question of our own identity is the central theme of the epoch emerges from even the most cursory acquaintance with our

literature, drama, films, sculpture, art and perhaps music, not to speak of sociology and psychology, and it is just too bad for English philosophy if it isn't so there too.

The book under review, handsomely produced in Canada, is really just a collection of Professor Macquarrie's most recent papers. The first of them is his inaugural at Union Theological Seminary, the burden of which is already familiar because part of it was published in *The Honest to God Debate*. The God-question is represented not as whether some entity exists which we call 'God', but as whether being as such is gracious: 'Either Being may have the character of indifference toward man, in which case he is thrown back on himself and must understand himself in a secular way; or else Being has the character of grace, so that human life can be lived in the strength of a power from beyond man himself, and ceases to be the tragic contradiction, the useless passion, which it would be in the absence of grace'. The obvious charge that this might seem very like the sort of subjective decision to see the world in a particular way which is exemplified by R. M. Hare's notion of a 'blik', exploited as it is (say) by Paul van Buren in *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, requires some serious investigation of the role of feeling not only in religion but in any kind of understanding at all. It is at this point that Professor Macquarrie, relying heavily on Heidegger, begins to suggest how we might alter our concept of ourselves: 'The existentialist analysis of the disclosive character of affective states seems to me an important contribution, and a corrective to a one-sided reliance on the objective, detached thinking that is characteristic of the sciences. Indeed, if it is denied that there are disclosive moods of the kind described by Heidegger and others, I find it hard to see how one could avoid positivism, or claim for religion any cognitive element whatever'. So

far from playing down the dependence of religion on emotion, then, we should rather be re-examining the relationship between emotion and understanding. The point of Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit* (the 'state' one is in) or *Stimmung* (how one is 'attuned' to one's situation) is precisely that it is a way of overturning the traditional structure of insight and mood: understanding occurs within feeling, not outside or against it. This is obviously an important thesis, not without parallels nearer home: in the work, for example, of Ian Ramsey. But however substantially it may be argued for by Heidegger, the handling of the whole issue by Professor Macquarrie remains disappointingly tentative and exploratory.

This would, in fact, be one's only major criticism of the general line of the book. While it is of course a great relief to see the disappearance from theological discourse of the

massive, self-supporting assertion, the new habit of scrupulous diffidence tends nervously towards the half-said and the vague gesticulation. Professor Macquarrie makes many interesting suggestions: it is a pity that he has not developed more of them. There is a good deal of evidence, in the central sections of the book, that he is supremely well equipped to elaborate the sort of understanding of man which any serious reconstruction of theology would require. The book also includes valuable essays on Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner, and ends with some reformulations of traditional doctrines in the light of the post-existentialist position outlined in the preceding sections. The book represents, then, work in progress, and it leaves one eager to see what Professor Macquarrie is going to do next.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

OLD AND NEW IN INTERPRETATION by James Barr. *S.C.M. Press, London, 1966, 30s.*

The central theme of this exciting book is the relation between the Old and New Testaments. Professor Barr challenges those who find the link in terms of such formulae as promise-fulfilment or revelation through God's 'mighty acts' in Israelite-Christian history. Even within the Old Testament itself 'history' can hardly function as 'a central and mandatory theological concept' (p. 68). The complexity of the material should warn us against trying to introduce such a unitary definition. Some of the tradition, for example, did not originate within the special historical experience of Israel but 'found its way into Israel's mind . . . by a limited modification of laws, stories, images and conceptions which were fairly common currency in the ancient Near East' (p. 17). Moreover, God's verbal communications have at least as much right to be considered the central theme of the Old Testament as his 'acts'.

On the view that the Old Testament must be understood in the light of Christ the author points out that 'in the minds of the apostles' the relation 'was the opposite: the problem was not how to understand the Old Testament but how to understand Christ . . . In the ancient situation . . . there is no doubt about the Old Testament; what is uncertain is the lineaments of the Christ' (p. 139). Inevitably the problem of typology and allegory arises for discussion. It is only a one-sided choice of

examples that can support 'the idea that allegory is definitely and ineluctably anti-historical' (p. 105) and as such distinguishable from typology. Take the traditional exegesis of the Canticle of Canticles 'as referring to God's dealings with Israel or to Christ and his relations with the Church. Here a text which originally had no historical reference, or very little, is allegorized to refer to events and relations which are historical or partly so' (p. 106).

The inter-testamental relations have often been discussed on the supposition of a contrast between Hebrew and Greek thought. Professor Barr joins Minear in branding much of this commonly accepted contrast as a caricature. It is misleading to pit a Hebrew view of bodily resurrection against a Greek theme of the immortality of the soul or to claim that 'history was without interest for the Greeks' (p. 50). Jewish writers themselves had a series of stock criticisms of the Gentile world. The polemic as expressed in Wisdom 13-14 or in Romans I 'animadverted . . . on the following phenomena: polytheism, idolatry, moral and especially sexual perversity, and the absence of guidance in the form of an explicit divine law' (p. 50). But the Jews did not see their difference from the Greeks 'as lying in ontological presuppositions, forms of logic, conceptions of being, views of time and history, or the presence or