

Reviews

THE JOHANNINE CIRCLE, by Oscar Cullmann. *SCM Press, London, 1976.* xii + 124 pp. £3.50

This book is written with beautiful lucidity, a quality it owes not only to its distinguished author but also, doubtless, to John Bowden, its translator. The argument moves gently and unhurriedly, step by step, laying out assumptions and conclusions fully, so that the reader can weigh them fairly and see exactly what he is being led to accept. Just as a piece of work, then, this is in itself an education in the ways of good New Testament scholarship.

But what of its contribution to the study of John? Anyone unacquainted with recent (and indeed not so recent) scholarship on the subject will find here an easily assimilable and judicious introduction. It is fair, perceptive, and, on the whole, comprehensive, without falling into tangled complexity.

Like much modern study of the Gospels, this book focuses on the setting in early Christianity, and more widely, which produced this writing. What sort of Christians were they? How typical of the Church in general? And what had been their formation in their pre-Christian days?

Many of Cullmann's answers to these questions would be generally accepted or at least reckoned as strong candidates. The background lies in the heterodox Judaism of the first century, with its opposition to the Temple, its emphasis on its own rites,

and its speculative tendencies in theology. John the Baptist was from such a background, and the Gospel reflects a meshing of the Johannine Christians with his followers which meant both similarity and distinction. So were the Samaritans, and the same kind of relationship is discernible with them.

Starting from this basis, the writer saw the Jesus of history and the developed guidance of Jesus to his followers in the writer's own time within a single perspective. He fuses together the past events of Jesus' life and death and their continued influence in the present.

All this is well said and impressively argued. Less well grounded is the connection seen between the Christianity of the Johannine circle and the Hellenists who appear in the early chapters (mainly) of Acts. Cullmann has presented this case before. It depends on decisions about the evidence of Acts which cannot be taken easily. Similarly, his theses that the writer of the Fourth Gospel (represented by 'the beloved disciple') was himself a disciple of Jesus in his lifetime, a man formed in heterodox Judaism, somewhat off the main track occupied by the Twelve, and that Jesus himself taught in this man's idiom as well as in that expressed in the Synoptic Gospels, hover some way above the ground, well argued though they are.

J.L. HOULDEN

MAKING THE MOST OF THE MISSAL, by John Ainslie. *Chapman. 1976. 110 pp.* £1.80.

John Ainslie's introduction to the new Missal is heartily welcome. As he says, "the liturgical renewal has hardly started", because few people, especially clergy, have really studied the new books to see just what they actually contain in the way of texts and practical directives and suggestions. In principle, there is a wealth

of liturgy there, waiting to be activated. Ainslie's book is intended as a practical introduction to such study and use of the Missal, especially the ICEL Missal. One may disagree with some of his views and it is unfortunate that, in his chapter on translation, he commits himself to a veritable howler of a mistranslation (p.27 - *in*

hoc corpore constituti refers, evidently to this body of flesh, not to the church!); his suggestions about the arrangement of the sanctuary strike me as rather bare and puritanical – he might, for instance, have mentioned the official recommendation of natural stone altars, and I think he is too ruthless in banishing all images of saints from the sanctuary. He is also mildly unsympathetic to the sacral, which is a pity – people are put off as much by secularised chumminess as by sacral remoteness, and the new rites, ideally,

offer a rehumanized sacralism as well as a new note of intimacy. But whatever quarrels one may have over details, the important point is that here is a clear, sensible book, which can help even those not instinctively turned on by liturgy to take part more fruitfully and prayerfully in the church's renewal of her worship.

I only hope that the discreetly veiled, but very telling, case against missalettes is noticed and taken to heart by those responsible!

SIMON TUGWELL, OP

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF BERNARD LONERGAN, by Hugo A. Meynell, *Library of Philosophy and Religion, Macmillan*, London, 1976. 201 pp. £10.00

NATURE AND SUPERNATURE, by E.L.Mascall, *DLT*, London, 1976. 94 pp. £1.50

BLESSED RAGE FOR ORDER: THE NEW PLURALISM IN THEOLOGY, by David Tracy, *Seabury*, New York, 1975. 271 pp. \$12.95

Whether philosophers, or even theologians, are likely to take seriously the claim that a well-known Catholic theologian is the author of "at a conservative estimate one of the half-dozen or so most important philosophical books to have appeared in the course of the present century", however eloquently the case for this thesis is made out, seems, in the present climate of thought, extremely doubtful, but this is the audacious claim which Hugo Meynell makes for Bernard Lonergan's *Insight*. Those whose minds have been marked indelibly by the philosophical lineage that descends from Kant through Hegel and Nietzsche to Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida and the rest, are not likely to budge. Others, however, whose starting-point is closer to British empiricism, should find themselves at home in Dr Meynell's skilful paraphrase of Lonergan's thought. The central contention that philosophy rests on a mistake when knowing is construed on the model of taking a look is radical and far-reaching in its implications. Many of Meynell's asides, for example on mental health and disease, not to mention his concluding chapters on natural theology and on problems of contemporary (British) philosophy, offer far more than skilful exposition of Lonergan. The importance of *Insight* may be judged, that is to say, by the way that a good philosopher is able to develop and appropriate it. The book concludes with an argument for Christian theism as "the most intelligent and reasonable world-view available for man". It is to be hoped that what is, for Meynell,

simply a matter of logic, will not be dismissed out of hand as mere apologetic, so that, despite this clear and masterly presentation, Lonergan as a philosopher will remain unread by theologians who have a distaste for logic and by philosophers who are afraid of Christian apologetics.

The St Michael's Lectures at Gonzaga University, Spokane, are so designed that the lecturer is obliged to "enter into dialogue with the immediately preceding lecturer", which means, in the case of *Nature and Supernature*, (that Dr Mascall has to comment on Bernard Lonergan's *Philosophy of God, and Theology*. Though "full of admiration" for this and "in full agreement" with that, it soon emerges that Mascall has "misgivings about taking cognitional theory as a starting-point", and, in the answers to questions at the end of his first lecture, it cannot be disguised that he rejects Lonergan's position altogether: "If you start inquiring how we can know, and whether or not we know, before we allow ourselves to know anything, it seems to me that you can never get going, that you cannot get away from the position in which Kant found himself" (page 36). Lonergan's "ultimate methodology" (page 10), though not Cartesian in its form, nevertheless rests upon granting privileged status to the human subject as perceiver, whereas Dr Mascall would rather say that the primary datum which we have is objects that are not ourselves (page 37).

His other two lectures deal with nature and grace and include a critical