

**BEING HUMAN, by Edmund Hill. OP Geoffrey Chapman, London. pp. xviii + 315. Softcover. £7.95.**

This is the third volume in the "Introducing Catholic Theology" series edited by Michael Richards. This series intends to follow the Vatican II suggestions that the Church, working within fresh guidelines for study and reflection, provide new investigations of scripture and history. Father Hill, an English Dominican now undertaking his academic ministry in the Southern African country of Lesotho, has written a textbook whose theme considers the process of developing our humanity in light of the Christian tradition. Certainly the concept of developing one's humanity is being given a hearing in some philosophical circles these days—witness the reception given to the recent work of Alasdair MacIntyre and John Finnis; moreover the publications of the American psychologist, Carl Rogers, have carried the message of "process humanism" to the once solidly behaviourist psychology classes. Yet Father Hill's book, while elucidating themes structurally similar to some of these writers, is nonetheless theological in scope and is not a primer in philosophy.

This is a text on what generically might be called the "Theology of the Human Person". Writing along the lines of an ontology of process—while explicitly disassociating himself from so-called "process theology"—Father Hill's preferred method for this inquiry is to consider the *drama* of the relationship between God and the human race. Of course, drama is a literary category; hence it requires techniques of literary analysis and criticism together with a knowledge of history. Yet this is not a reductive procedure rendering other inquiries like historiography, sociology or literary criticism substitutable for theology. The drama of salvation through the concept of "process" serves as the building material for this analysis.

Obviously, this is a huge, complicated task—to develop a consistent theology of the human person utilizing the insights of scripture, philosophy, history and cultural anthropology while keeping in mind nearly three thousand years of the instantiated relationship between God and the human race. Even the experienced reader will come away learning something from this book. While intended as a textbook—on this the reader should keep in mind that the *Summa Theologiae* was also intended as a textbook for beginners—*Being Human* is not a mere summary of what other theologians and biblical scholars have written. While certainly conversant with both recent and standard theological and philosophical material—contemporary theologians like Schillebeeckx and Rahner are cited frequently—Father Hill develops theologically many issues in light of his own positions. And if the goal of such a book is to engage the reader to think more deeply than he or she had done before about these issues, then Father Hill has succeeded. Beginning with God's first contact with the human race in the Book of Genesis—here Father Hill discusses recent biblical interpretations of the various traditions and follows this throughout the text—there follow, for example, philosophical discussions of the Platonic notion of the soul (and the author's continued insistence that the Christian view of soul must not be reducible to Ryle's infamous "ghost in a machine"), biblical analysis of New Testament issues, discussions about the nature of sin, especially original sin, insights on predestination, discussions of the role of sexual equality in the church and political reflections on what might be necessary to sustain the possibility of "being human" in the future. This reviewer judged that the last third of the book was the more scholarly, especially the thoughtful treatment of Augustine. Yet the novice reader can learn from the entire book, as Father Hill has used a colloquial style which is easily accessible to any informed person. Study questions follow each chapter, although some of the questions appeared to this reader to be a bit open-ended.

Father Hill's Southern Africa experience provides an interesting backdrop for the entire book. Not only does he provide intriguing examples from the non-western world to help elucidate his theologizing, but his encounter with the diverse cultures of

Southern Africa appears to have influenced the very way he does theology. Midway through the text there appears the following statement which might, I suggest, serve as the fundamental hermeneutical principle for this way of making theology: "...while we can and must make the distinction between cultural norms and theological ones, we can never *separate* the two, because we cannot separate people from their culture...and we should not try". (p. 158) Assuming this suggestion is correct, several questions regarding method and its implication need to be asked. For example, Father Hill's discussion of polygamy in the African cultures—or his remarks on the military mystique of past Viking cultures—appears to lack a criterion for distinguishing what should be absorbed from a culture and incorporated into the local church and what ought to be questioned and probably not appropriated. A tricky issue, to be sure. Nonetheless, in discussing the relation of culture to theology, I suggest that a tighter principle of selection is needed. Of course, this is much to ask from an introductory textbook; however I detected some unclarity in the discussions regarding the assimilation of the mores of a culture into the practices of a local church. The argument just isn't clear. On the other hand the insights from non-western cultures provide a unique strength for the book, separating it from so much text-book writing totally dependent upon western history and culture. A good example here is Father Hill's fascinating analysis of the concept of community. This book would serve a beginning college class well. Also it would be quite good for adult continuing education projects at the parish or local institution level. To assist the reader, Father Hill has included an analytical table of contents, a rather thorough general index and indices to texts used both from scripture and the *Summa Theologiae*.

While some sections of the text might have benefited from an editor with a full fountain pen, nonetheless the novice reader in theology and the person more experienced in these matters can learn much from this book. It does engage the reader. It satisfies the criterion of the series to work from fresh guidelines. It is a good text from which to challenge young minds to think more clearly and critically about the nature of the process of developing one's humanity in the Christian tradition and the central role of becoming human in that tradition. And that project is certainly pressing as the twentieth century nears its last decade.

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That a space is open for a journal that would concentrate on the period from the Reformation onwards is the gamble that *Modern Theology* is taking. The field has more runners than one might at first suppose. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, the 'heaviest' as well as the most venerable one on the scene, maintains a high standard of critical reviews of the literature on the period in question. *The Scottish Journal of Theology* and *The Heythrop Journal*, although distinctively 'confessional' in origin, and to some extent still in practice, often publish exactly the sort of articles that *Modern Theology* will now attract—but neither of them is exclusively 'modern'. The bias of *Religious Studies* is towards philosophical theology and natural religion. *Theology* and *The Clergy Review*, while consistently offering much worthwhile theology, scholarly as well as speculative, necessarily appeal predominantly to Anglican and Catholic readerships respectively. *The Downside Review* maintains the Benedictine tradition of hospitality to all comers. The other journals become increasingly specialised: *One in Christ*, *Sobornost*, *The Expository Times*... Not to mention the journals devoted to biblical studies and ecclesiastical history. If the state of theology may be judged by the number of flourishing 'little magazines' (as literary people would say), then we are surely in a modest ferment.

In fact, despite the cutback in staff and resources, more people than ever want to