

—Ronald Knox being one of the most effective — but Miss Furlong cuts through this to a sense of expansiveness and geniality, almost a peace with 'the wilderness of this world', at the end of Bunyan's life. It is an attractive picture, more so than the attenuated Arnoldian 'spirituality' in Leavis's account, but however much one isolates Bunyan's 'poetry' from the rest of his considerable output, the trumpets sound on the other side to the note of *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, a tract published the year after Bunyan's death after an errand of reconciliation.

Miss Furlong is concerned to draw our attention to the poetry of Bunyan, by which she means the major prose works rather than his occasional attempts at versifying. Her purpose is not traditional literary criticism, and perhaps there is too much in the way of summary of what happens, but to draw our attention to the pressures which produce this art, and those which Bunyan had to overcome. Here again, psychology seems to take precedence over other forms of explanation, but she does have some interesting things to say about Puritanism in the historical and theological context.

Reading Miss Furlong's book soon after the study published by William Hale White ('Mark Rutherford') in

1905, one is struck by a number of similarities. Both include a full treatment of the illuminating Luther comparison, and both demonstrate a great sympathy with their subject across important theological divides. Both writers are at pains to follow and explain Bunyan's continuing influence; and, most importantly, both end up being more illuminating about their own concerns than about their subject. I don't regard this as a damning criticism. Readers of Miss Furlong's *Travelling In* will find similar concerns dealt with more convincingly because a more tangible subject is to hand. There are some useful reflections on the metaphor of the spiritual journey which are far less diffuse than in the earlier book, though her allegiance to the mystical tradition occasionally gives an alien flavour to Bunyan's Protestantism.

The general reader will find this book an introduction to Bunyan which provides a very personal, but possible alternative to the standard works of Roger Sharrock and Henri Talon. Christians whose theology may be closer to Bunyan's than Miss Furlong's will also find a good deal to annoy them—I hope they find, as I did, that the annoyance proves largely constructive.

ROGER POOLEY

CHRISTIAN TRUTH, by John Coventry. *Darton, Longman & Todd*, London, 1975. 104 pp. £1.60.

There is a great need in the Church at present for good and readable books on the theology of revelation for the use of intelligent laity and for theological students, in order to replace the old manuals of fundamental theology, which are now accumulating dust on the bookshelves of seminary libraries. Such works, naturally enough, need to incorporate the insights of the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, which document was perhaps one of the crowning achievements of the Council, and which will long provide stimulus and foundations for theological reflection on this vital subject.

However, whether this need will be met by Fr Coventry's new book is, to my mind, more than questionable. While written in a stimulating and refreshing style, and trying to move away from old-style apologetics in the

more 'personalistic' direction set by Latourelle and Moran, *Christian Truth* leaves one most unsatisfied. No doubt one of the functions of theology is to stimulate questions, and to this extent certainly Fr Coventry has succeeded. But are the questions well posed, and, even more important, in default of answers, are there adequate direction-finders offered to the student to help discover his own solutions? The following are only two examples of many which caused this reviewer to have his doubts.

First of all, one would have liked much greater clarification on the question of the role of the *apostles* in the transmission of revelation. Having begun with the most important notion of 'faith' and 'revelation' as being correlative, and of the apostles therefore as primary faith-recipients of the revelation of Christ, the book then

becomes very unclear regarding the question as to whether the apostles have a unique function in the primitive church. ('Nor, it will be seen, is it meaningful to assign any end to the apostolic age, or to draw a chronological or theological line between the "apostles" and the "Church"', p. 31.)

Naturally enough, this raises further questions, and two in particular. First of all, regarding the authority of the apostles within the primitive church; if, as we are told by Fr Coventry, 'there is no faith of the apostles that is prior to the faith of, the revelation experience of, the Church' (p. 43), then how do we make sense of Paul's protestations to *be* an apostle (cf. Galatians 1:1-10), based upon divine mandate; and the statement in Acts 2:42 to the effect that the early church remained faithful to the 'apostles' doctrine? This does not deny, of course, that the apostles were members of the Church themselves; but surely, *qua* apostles, were they not set up in a special relationship within the Church, of authority as 'founders', their faith-experience being in some sense normative? This raises the whole issue of precisely what constitutes apostleship in the primitive church, concerning which there is a growing debate within the field of New Testament scholarship; but the very existence of such a debate would seem to suggest that the blurring of the distinction between 'apostle' and 'primitive community' suggested by Coventry itself raises as many problems as it solves.

Secondly, the problem of apostleship becomes urgent regarding the whole question of the *canonicity* of the New Testament, which receives very bare treatment, to say the least, in Fr Coventry's work. It is clear that the whole idea of the special character of the New Testament documents was, in the history of the early development of the Canon, linked to the concept of the apostolic authority of those documents, the apostles being the 'primordial inspiration' as far as the New Testament is concerned. This link between apostolicity and canonicity found coherent expression, for instance, in the theology of M.-J. Lagrange, who claimed that it was precisely because a work was linked in some way with an apostle that it was viewed as the inspired word of God, since the apostles were the original spirit-filled recipients and proclaimers of the Gospel. Obviously,

modern critical scholarship has raised many problems concerning the apostolic authority of the New Testament writings, some real and some false; but the very fact that the final edition of *Dei Verbum* continues to maintain the 'apostolic origin' of the Gospels and of the other New Testament writings (para. 18) means surely that theologians writing on revelation must consider seriously the link between 'canonicity' and 'apostolicity'. Even, for instance, when Vatican II speaks of the 'others of the apostolic age' who helped to compile the written Gospels, there was still the link between these 'others' and the 'same message they (i.e. the apostles) had preached'; and therefore there is still apparently a sense in which these writings are the message of the apostles, and not only of the amorphous 'primitive community' we hear so much about these days. And a discussion of these points would have made Fr Coventry's Chapter Three ('Revelation and the New Testament') that much less unsatisfying, particularly in connection with the question of the uniqueness of the New Testament writings.

The other major question which came to mind upon reading *Christian Truth* was in connection with the magisterium, and here I quote Fr Coventry more fully:

And here at this very central point (i.e. whether a papal pronouncement can require the assent of faith) is an undecided issue in Catholic theology, affecting the whole exercise of *magisterium*, papal or episcopal, ordinary or extraordinary. Can the authoritative voice in the Church determine that particular matters are matters of divine revelation by decreeing them to be so? Or must there not be a theological method, independent of the organs of proclamation, for deciding the scope and therefore the limits of what is divinely revealed? This is precisely the question of the scope of infallibility left undetermined by Vatican I (p. 91).

Now it is a statement such as this which perhaps illustrates best of all the difficulty of writing popular theology; since we are inevitably led into a cul-de-sac whatever solution we adopt to the second question! If these 'independent' theological methods spoken about can sit in judgement on the magisterium itself, and are truly

independent of it, then they would have refereeing ability over and above even solemn statements of the magisterium, a state of affairs which would leave us and all succeeding generations at the mercy of the theologians, a situation not too far removed from *chaqu'un son Pape*, and as distasteful to Fr Coventry as to the rest of us. If, on the other hand, these "methods" function within the magisterium process itself, then they are not truly 'independent' of it; and thus the two questions are not alternatives with the conjunction 'or' between them, but are 'both/and' alternatives, with a possibly affirmative answer to both of them.

There is much which I found enjoyable reading in *Christian Truth*, and I liked in particular the section on the relationship between mysticism and faith, a connection not dealt with sufficiently, if at all, in many works of revelation theology. But one was left with the final wish that Fr Coventry will one day present us with a much longer book, in which he handles, with much more room to manoeuvre, the problems raised in *Christian Truth*, and, with the abilities which he has demonstrated so often before, fills some of the yawning gaps left by this little book.

JOHN M REDFORD

PERCEIVING WOMEN, edited by Shirley Ardener. *Malaby Press*, London, 1975. 167 pp. £6-95.

FLESH OF MY FLESH, by Una Kroll. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1975. 112 pp. £1-50.

As stated in the introduction (p. vii), the essays in *Perceiving Women* are principally concerned with the question of how women in the groups or societies studied see themselves, how this relates to the way in which their society defines them, and how outside observers see them. Theories of the structures of thought are therefore very prominent in all the essays, but given this very specialised approach to the subject matter, this is a book well worth reading both for the information presented and for the sake of the questions it raises. The most important of these is why, in virtually every society, women are not 'articulate', and are more or less invisible in ethnographical or historical accounts despite constituting at least half of the population.

Answers are sought in the analysis of structures of thought and symbolic expression in each case, not least because in these areas women play a part as prominent as their numbers would warrant. It is argued that the dominant conceptual models of a group or society, which are by definition those accepted as most intelligible by ethnographers, are generated by the socially dominant (normally male) class or group, and only superficially appropriated by subordinate groups. The latter, including women, will have their own self-image, but it will not be one which is articulated in the same terms as the dominant model

because of the contradictions between them. Instead it will be expressed symbolically, and it is therefore by means of a study of symbolic behaviour and thought that subordinate self-images can be made explicit.

This approach has yielded some very encouraging results, but it has weaknesses which are at times exemplified in the articles in this book. None of the authors pretend that West African societies, gypsies in Britain, diplomats' wives and Carmelite nuns are groups of the same type and therefore precisely comparable. Nevertheless, in more or less veiled ways the authors succumb to the temptation to suppress some of the crucial differences (see for example S. Ardener, p. 49).

It is the central focus on the structures of thought, and the virtual autonomy they are granted from social relations and relations of production that underlie an almost platonic conception of human societies in some of the articles (e.g. p. 37 where reference is made to symbolic 'templates' which serve to generate events from time to time in unexpected ways; or p. xii-xix where the theory of the structures of thought are outlined). This rules out an approach such as that of C. Meillassoux ('Essai d'interprétation du phénomène économique dans les sociétés traditionnelles d'auto-subsistance', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* (4) 1960, 38-67). Also