

explored. It is an area about which there has in the past been pointless and irrelevant discussion. But friends like St John were not irrelevant to Newman, and the everyday realities of the dynamic which was his life cannot simply be ignored. One wonders whether Ker's stress on Newman's 'masculinity' is some sort of refracted view of this discussion. In any event, the categories of 'masculine' and 'feminine', even in inverted commas, do not seem to be helpful, particularly when the 'masculine' is characterized (as on p. viii) by 'an astonishing resilience and uncompromising toughness in the face of adversity' and a 'kind of resourceful practicality'. The wider world is largely ignored, too, though it was, of course, changing radically in Newman's lifetime, and social and political change clearly impinged on his life and on his Church and left their mark upon his thought.

Ker might with reason say that all that is beyond his brief; a 750 page biography is already something of a 'theological nine pounder'. (It actually weighs 3lb. 3oz.) That is a valid choice. But it is a choice which defines human life, the *bios* of which he writes, in a particular way. This biography is a rich and valuable account of what Newman said and did; it faithfully records what he thought about different things at different times. But the man remains elusive.

Perhaps that is the sort of biography Newman deserves. He did, after all, record in the *Apologia* his 'thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator'. And for all his introspection Newman was such an intensely private man that his reflections on the former of those two subjects, at least, were always coy, if not reserved.

Was the man whose biography this is (and whose centenary we now celebrate) a saint? Newman himself thought not. It was 'those who are at a distance', he said, who 'have fee-fa-fum notions about one' (p. 350). Ker thinks that Newman was at least a prophet: his work contained 'an exact prophecy' of Vatican II (p. 684; cf. pp. 662, 743) and 'anticipated' many of its 'central themes' (p. viii). He notes, with seeming approval, its designation as 'Newman's Council' (p. 411). Vatican II, in fact, pulled the teeth of Newman's later ecclesiology. When the radical implications of that thought are at last appropriated, it may be possible to re-evaluate the question of Newman's prescience and of his sanctity. It may then be found that more 'fee-fa-fum' notions of the man may be entertained and that a more 'fee-fa-fum' life may be written.

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THE ACTUALITY OF ATONEMENT by Colin E. Gunton, T & T Clark 1988. Pp. xiv + 222. NP.

Professor Gunton sees a study of atonement as particularly needed at the present time, which has been characterised by one recent writer as a time of 'The Abandonment of Atonement' (p. xi). But the abandonment, even on the British scene alone, should not be regarded as so complete as that suggests in view of the recently published books by Paul Fiddes and Richard Swinburne. Moreover at least two other books by British scholars are well advanced in preparation. But his own contribution is none the less welcome

for that.

The book begins with a polemic against the legacy of the Enlightenment, summarising the main burden of some of his earlier writings. Its relevance to the argument is to prepare the way for an insistence on the role of metaphor as a mode of discovery of reality and not as 'without meaning' or 'mere picture'. That may readily be granted without necessarily taking on board all his criticisms of Enlightenment thought.

The main body of the book is a study of the three metaphors of atonement—victory, justice and sacrifice—as indispensable to the apprehension and articulation of God's dealing with the sin of the world. The metaphors do not automatically convey a true meaning; they can be misunderstood. The three central chapters of the book seek to clarify their proper meaning by a highly condensed, but often illuminating, discussion of their origins in the New Testament and of crucial moments in the history of doctrine. The last two chapters deal with their implications for the doctrine of God and for the Christian community as the place where victory, justice and sacrifice are to be realised in practice.

But the aim of the book is not just to illuminate episodes in the history of the doctrine. It is to establish the permanent and reality-giving character of the three chosen atonement metaphors. It is the validity of this central argument that calls for discussion.

For his understanding of the way metaphors function, Gunton is particularly dependent on an article by Richard Boyd (in ed. A. Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought*, C.U.P., 1979, pp. 356–406), though his account of it is extremely concise. The article is in fact concerned to give an account of theory-constitutive metaphors in science and their inductive open-endedness in contra-distinction from literary interaction metaphors with their conceptual open-endedness; Boyd sees the former as designed to encourage investigation of real similarities or analogies existing between the primary and secondary subjects of the metaphor, in contrast to the latter, which encourage the reader to consider the primary subject in the light of the already familiar conception of the secondary (pp. 362–3; 406). I am not as convinced as Gunton is about the practical applicability of this understanding of metaphor to his particular theological topic. Metaphors of atonement, he argues, are a vital part of the first Christians' expression of the significance of finding 'themselves, after what has happened with Jesus ... newly accommodated to the "causal structures of reality"—set in a different place before God and in the world' (p. 46). The stress is placed, in accordance with the realistic character of Boyd's theory of metaphor, not on the metaphors as drawing on well understood aspects of our experience in a way designed to provide creative potential for the understanding of Christ's death; it lies rather on the way in which the language itself is shaped by the realities of the world, i.e. the meaning of the words is determined by the nature of God's action in Christ. In the interaction between the primary and secondary subjects of the metaphor, the main emphasis is on the way the theological context has altered the meaning of the words, even in their everyday employment. Thus, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus show what '*real sacrifice, victory and justice*' (p. 52. ital. original) mean.

If that is so, it is clearly going to be no easy matter determining what real sacrifice, victory and justice are, and avoiding the misunderstandings of

them that Gunton allows to be possible. How does he himself tackle the task?

The chapter on victory is entitled 'the Battlefield and the demons'. It is rightly much concerned with the demons over whom the victory is won according to the New Testament writers. The position he wants to maintain is that 'the language of the demonic ... enables us to bring to expression the fact of the subjection of human moral agents to forces they are unable to control' (p. 73). In this he believes himself to be at one with the New Testament. But his attempt to show that he is is highly unsatisfactory. He quotes a passage from George Caird interpreting Paul in that way, and then begins his own comments with the words: 'If Caird is right, ...' (p. 65). On the next page we are told, without further evidence, that 'so it is with the New Testament language of the demonic in general.... The writers mean us to understand the demonic realistically, but in an appropriately indirect manner.' It is only later writers, like Origen, who 'conceive the powers as essentially transcendent forces'. This seems to me highly dubious exegesis. But whatever the source of his interpretation of the language may be, it is not clear to me that he succeeds in establishing his claim that 'it is an *essential* way of speaking if we are to understand certain features of our fallen world' (p. 74: my italics).

In the chapter on sacrifice he rightly emphasises the wide range of types of offering that are spoken of as sacrifices in the Old Testament, as well as the metaphorical use of the term already to be found there. This implies, as he points out, that sacrificial practices do not always have the same meaning. It is therefore puzzling to know just what is being claimed by his insistence that '*we understand* from the life and death of Jesus what a sacrifice really is' (p. 123: italics original). It might seem to imply a conception of language as 'mirroring' reality, but that is an idea that Gunton firmly repudiates. Is it perhaps an overreaction to talk about 'mere' metaphors, which Gunton rightly objects to? But to claim that the description of Christ's death as a sacrifice is an appropriate metaphorical way of indicating something real about it that could not otherwise be brought to expression does not require us to say that there is something which 'a sacrifice really is'. Yet, despite his stress on the varied meanings inherent in different sacrificial practices, Gunton does seem to want to say that and appears to believe himself able to do so. A sacrifice is something that removes the uncleanness which pollutes the good creation, and its importance in the atonement context is to take us beyond purely moral categories. But is that understanding of the term given by the reality apprehended in Christ's life and death, as his initial claim suggests it should be, or is it derived more (as the form of the discussion suggests) from Mary Douglas' account of primitive religion?

As this review will have suggested, the book offers many interesting and provoking ideas, only a few of which it has been possible to indicate here. But its overall argument, which is at times elusive by virtue of the compactness of its presentation, fails, for me at least, to carry full conviction.

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