

surprising in a reputedly secular society.

Having reported on these findings in his previous book, *Exploring Inner Space*, Hay here provides a brief history of the Centre itself, beginning with the work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter at the end of the last century. It was at Carpenter's invitation as Principal of Manchester College that William James there delivered the Hibbert Lectures in 1908, beginning an association that would lead to the creation of Hardy's Religious Experience Research Unit in 1969.

A graduate of Exeter, Hardy enjoyed a brilliant career in zoology at the University of Hull and later at Aberdeen, where he became Regius Professor of natural history. In 1946, Hardy was given the Linacre Chair of Zoology at Oxford, which he held with distinction until 1961. A Fellow of the Royal Society, he continued to conduct field studies and pursue his investigations even after officially retiring. A colleague of Sir Julian Huxley, and one of the foremost marine ecologists in the world, Hardy was invited to give the Gifford Lectures in 1964. Two years later, he proposed the establishment of the Unit, to which he intended to devote his remaining years in the empirical study of religious experience.

Hay ably chronicles the development of the Centre, cataloguing the methodology and findings of Hardy, his staff, and his successors, Edward Robinson and Hay himself. Worth particular note is the pioneering 1977 volume on children's religious experience by Robinson and Tim Beardsworth, *The Original Vision*, which has been supported and amplified by the important recent book by Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*.

In addition to valuably summarizing similar work in the United States, Hay's concluding reflections on scientific inquiry, religion, and the Church are likely to be chiefly interesting for anyone concerned with the philosophical, theological, and pastoral implications of research into religious experience. As demonstrated by Nicholas Lash's attack on the influence of William James and the work of the Alister Hardy Research Centre in *Easter in Ordinary*, the field of such study is mined with methodological and ideological presuppositions.

Whether Lash has correctly understood either James or the work of the Centre may be debatable, but the issues he raises warrant serious discussion. Hay's book represents a promising start in that dialogue.

RICHARD WOODS OP

**THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR** by G.F. Hanlon SJ. *Cambridge University Press*, 1990. Pp. xiii + 229. £30.00.

It is often said today that Balthasar is a conservative theologian and yet the topic which Gerard O'Hanlon has chosen for his research reveals the daring side of Balthasar's theology, namely his approach to the problem of the immutability of God. In a detailed study of the texts O'Hanlon has shown how Balthasar stands on a razor's edge by defending a type of suffering and temporality in God without falling into the excesses of a limited God such as we find in process theology or in the philosophy of Hegel.

O'Hanlon demonstrates first that Balthasar wants to remain faithful to the tradition and thus to the strengths of the *via negativa* which places in relief the absolute transcendence of God. God as such is beyond the world of finitude and hence incapable of either becoming or suffering in the metaphysical sense. In this Balthasar is in total agreement with the classical metaphysical tradition as represented, for example, by St. Thomas. On the other hand, Balthasar feels compelled, on the basis of revelation and its insistence upon God's involvement with us even to the point of the cross, to admit that the world does make a difference to God. But how can he reconcile these two apparently contradictory positions?

First of all, it is noteworthy that Balthasar like his mentor Karl Barth takes Christology as his starting point. In Jesus we must learn to see who God is. Since Jesus is capable of emptying himself, of becoming part of the world and of suffering on the cross, this fact must give us a clue as to the nature of the divine being. God must, therefore, be capable of suffering and temporality because this is precisely what we see in the revelation event.

It is interesting to observe that whereas process thinkers look for a solution to the problem of divine immutability in a new approach to metaphysics, Balthasar argues that the key to resolving the dilemma lies in the trinitarian character of God made known in revelation. Only on the basis of a trinitarian account of God can we affirm that God can relate himself to the world without becoming dependent on it. Balthasar develops this point by arguing that God's trinitarian life is an event, fully in movement, in which the three divine persons exist in an eternal process of self-giving and receptivity. The Father, for example, does not want to be God without the Son and so gives himself away. In turn the Son receives his being as eternal gift and returns the gift to the Father who likewise becomes receptive. There is, then, something like a *passio* in God which makes possible God's passion in the world. Moreover, since the divine life is infinite movement and reciprocal self-giving, there is something analogous to becoming in God. Balthasar approves the idea of Gregory of Nyssa that God is an ever-newly bubbling fountain.

The crux of the matter is that Balthasar dares to affirm what he calls a supra-time, supra-suffering, and supra-kenosis in God which grounds his kenosis in time and his participation in our history and suffering. O'Hanlon shows very well that the neuralgic point here is that Balthasar's way of affirming these attributes of God lies somewhere between metaphor and concept and leans more to metaphor. Hence what Balthasar gains in poetic expression he loses in conceptual precision. O'Hanlon demonstrates as well that what Balthasar says is free of logical inconsistency but admits that greater conceptual rigour would give his position more plausibility. The lack of conceptual clarity becomes especially visible in the chapter, 'Balthasar and Other Approaches', where the author makes a comparison between Balthasar and some leading thinkers in the anglo-saxon tradition. The strongest impression I received from this chapter is that Balthasar moves on a totally different terrain than these philosophers. Whereas they are seeking to overcome logical conundrums, Balthasar is swept away by

the burning force of the revelation of the crucified God. This revelation leads him more to lyric than to logic.

We should certainly be grateful for this study. O'Hanlon tackles one of the most important and complex issues in Balthasar's theology. He has sifted the texts and brought order into what often appear as scattered and unsystematic insights. He backs up his interpretations with carefully noted references to Balthasar's works. Although the subject matter is dense, the argument is clearly presented and the reader is helped by a well-structured presentation which is often preceded by an introduction to the issue at hand and followed by a conclusion and evaluation. This structure helps the reader not to become lost in the detail and to follow the thread of the argument not only of the chapter but of the book as a whole. Hence the book is certainly to be recommended to anyone who wishes to deepen his or her knowledge of this important aspect of Balthasar's theology and who desires to probe the import of Balthasar's understanding of divine suffering and temporality not only for Christian theology in general but also for the dialogue between Balthasar's position and other theological and philosophical options on offer today.

JOHN O'DONNELL SJ

**PEACE OF THE PRESENT : AN UNVIOLENT WAY OF LIFE** by John S. Dunne. *Notre Dame Press, 1991. Pp xii + 160. \$19.95.*

This book paraphrases the ancient story of the journey of life through death to resurrection. It is a journey in time, we are told, but its stages are not confined to the limitations of time, for each is shot through with the influence and the presence of the others. 'It is the story of emergence and separation, I think, that ends in return and reunion, the basic cycle of story' (p. 84).

Professor Dunne proposes and sustains his theme almost entirely in terms of imagery—old things in new wrappings. It is 'my story', but as part of a larger whole (p. 73), since we all long for relationship with things, activities and people. But although it starts as many stories it ends as one, when simplicity is achieved in prayer, and our separation from each other and from God is seen itself to contain the presence that we seek. This depends, however, on 'letting go', letting our 'will' grow into 'willingness', which is close to hope. The very longing engendered by 'lack in general and loss in particular' is an expression of love 'present in the absence'. The proof of love lies in waiting. The refusal to wait is seen as 'theft'; the despair of love as 'pride'; and both are forms of violence. 'I want to link non-violence with the heart's desire' (p. xi). 'Waiting on love means waiting on that feeling I don't have ... and it awaiting me' (p. 52f.).

What enables us to wait is prayer. 'God the divider' is 'the one who shines' (p. 47), and in contemplating Him in the absence which shrouds his presence, we move from faithfulness to faith, and attain to simplicity, where there can be no violence because the many are now enfolded in the meridian of love. 'I have an idea that contemplative life is the secret of passage, that violence and numbing of heart arise in the absence, and