

Duffy deals easily with Juan Alfaro's personalist and psychological approach to the supernatural (ch 6) which is seen as a 'variation in focus'(p 144) rather than a serious divergence from Rahner. Although Duffy accepts Schillebeeckx's view that Max Seckler's theories concerning Aquinas' *instinctus fidei* reduced faith to nature, he rejects Schillebeeckx's trenchant criticism of the supernatural existential. Duffy argues convincingly that Schillebeeckx's critique presupposes a basic misunderstanding of the rôle and origin of the existential in Rahner's thought.

A prominent preoccupation of Duffy's is the positive attitude he takes towards process thought. He considers Eulalio Baltazar's process arguments against scholasticism to be successful only against a decadent scholasticism but not against Rahner whom Baltazar seems to have misread (ch. 7). However, process thought, Duffy believes has come a long way since Baltazar and its theism may become yet more sophisticated. Duffy defends Rahner's theology against all sorts of objections (ch. 8): its supposed equivocation about the supernatural existential, its anthropocentric methodology, its individualism at the expense of the interpersonal. But it is Mark L Taylor's critique of Rahner's impassible (and so not truly a personal and related) God which impresses Duffy the most. Rahner's Thomism is said to have prevented him from following through the transcendental turn to the subject in order to base his concept of God more radically on human experience of love and personal relationship.

But what of von Balthasar's objections to the Rahnerian project? This Duffy passes over in unjustified silence. Although he concedes von Balthasar's work a place within today's pluralism of theologies, Duffy seems to have little respect for it except as an antidote to excessive rationalism. (Given his suspicion of impassibility, one wonders what Duffy would make of von Balthasar's doctrine of God!) Instead, he wants to develop *Rahner's* theology, intertwining the sacred and the secular and envisaging a universal and even cosmic dimension to grace in which 'nature' is not merely 'human nature'. But what philosophy can best articulate such Christian experience? Duffy leaves himself hovering between loyal adherence to the metaphysics of Rahner's transcendental Thomism and a perilous plunge into the philosophy of process.

SIMON G. GAINÉ

LITERARY FORMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT By James L Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *SPCK* 1992 pp. 219 paper £12.99.

The study of literary form is essential to any critical understanding of the Bible. It figured prominently in earlier source and form criticism as a way of detecting underlying material; redaction criticism focused attention on the significance of overall *genre*. With more recent, narrative and rhetorical methods, the whole question has taken on even greater importance. So this book, written by two seminary professors from

Dubuque Iowa, is a timely work of reference. It helpfully summarises the current state of scholarship and it will cut many corners for undergraduates writing essays of the "What is a Gospel?"—"Examine Paul's use of rhetoric"—type.

More than 30 different forms, larger ones like gospel and letter, smaller ones like diatribe, household code, hymn or parable, midrash and miracle, are discussed in highly condensed but still readable chapters. Paul and the Evangelists are examined in depth; the rest of the New Testament gets very short measure: there is hardly anything for example on I Peter and nothing on the Johannine Epistles. Nevertheless, this is the most comprehensive guide generally available. At the end of each chapter, the authors explain the value for interpretation of the form under discussion and also supply an annotated bibliography for further reading—these are excellent ideas which turn what could have been a dull catalogue into a lively manual for serious study. The general reader, on the other hand, may find some sections too brief as they stand, with intriguing questions posed but not explored. For a more coherent and authoritative treatment, David Aune's *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, (James Clarke 1987), could be a better buy (at 4 pence less for a hardback with 40 more pages!).

The one lasting impression left by these surveys is the amazing literary vitality and originality of earliest Christianity. The outpoured Spirit seems to have enlivened the old letter, remoulding and reconfiguring inherited forms to its new purposes.

JOHN MUDDIMAN

AUGUSTINE AND THE LIMITS OF VIRTUE, by James Wetzel.
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992. Pp xiv + 246. £35.00

Wetzel intends two main points by his phrase 'the limits of virtue', negatively Augustine's dissatisfaction with pagan virtue and its blindness to the psychology of inner conflict and, positively, his theistic reformulation of virtue as the motivational integrity of graced willing. Augustine, Wetzel maintains, indicts the *philosophi* for a not wholly realistic assessment of the human condition, but does not reject it totally. Augustine's late theological preoccupation with grace, he views as an extension of the earlier philosophical concern with virtue and human freedom. Never does he relinquish late antiquity's ideal of the bringing together of virtue, autonomy and human flourishing; what alters is not the ideal's nature, but the manner of its appropriation. Closely tied to this is Wetzel's belief that Augustine's particular interest in human autonomy necessitates a strong doctrine of grace, found especially in God's full control over human salvation.

Wetzel begins with Socrates' equation of virtue and knowledge. Augustine, he suggests, adopted this equation, in a Stoic form, in his earlier works. Later, his appreciation of sin's power called this view into