

The great weakness and omission in this book is the near absence of any mention of the scientific study of religion. It seems to me self-evident that Religious Studies provide the melting pot for the kind of relationship explored here, and quite extraordinary that it is ignored. One could apply to this debate the dictum of Richard Roberts that theology without religious studies loses its purchase on reality, and Religious Studies without Theology is reductionist. The omission is partly rectified by Robert Towler in an Epilogue. He has studied contemporary forms of religiousness and recognizes the importance of such descriptive work. But that debate is older and wider than a brief epilogue could be expected to indicate. One hopes that the other contributors, familiar as they are with Max Weber and

tion of the world'. It is neither a discipline nor a perspective, but an activity in which the meaning men make of themselves and their experience is transformed to become a disclosure of God. Any form of discourse by which we interpret our experience is potentially theological. Sociology offers positive possibilities here as well as contributing to the work of critical history in liberating us from the past. Much needs to be unpacked, but these seeds are valuable. St Thomas, might consider the initial confrontation between the empirical study of religion and normative theology in liberal protestantism, and the significant developments taking place in America today.

ROBERT MORGAN

**ROMERO: EL SALVADOR'S MARTYR** by Dermot Keogh. *Dominican Publications*, Dublin, 1981. pp 160 Stg £2.80. Ir. £3.30 p.b.

Dermot Keogh was present at the funeral of Archbishop Romero, which he had gone to report for RTE. About 100,000 people were in the Cathedral Square of San Salvador when shots were fired from the region of the Palacio Nacional. Many people including Dr Keogh took refuge inside the Cathedral . . .

"Where are the police and the army?" I asked, with all the indignation of one who had lived in a democracy all his life. "Outside shooting in at us", was the laconic reply from an old man who found it pathetic that anyone could ask such a naive question. This was a lesson in the philosophy of national security.'

This hastily produced, but timely book makes an excellent introduction to the plight of ordinary people in El Salvador – and, in general, in Latin America. El Salvador's Catholic Church provides a clear example of the different responses to the Latin American situation which Catholics may make. Romero's own history shows the joys and perils of honest Christian discipleship in the national security state. Influenced profoundly by the life and death of his Jesuit friend Rutilio Grande, he saw that the situation required one fundamental option: to be for or ag-

ainst the oppressor; despite much opposition from within the hierarchy in El Salvador, he maintained the option for the poor which had been expressed at Medellin in 1968 and again, with much reactionary opposition, at Puebla in 1979.

The book is good on the history of El Salvador in the past century – the social implications of the decision to go for intensive coffee cultivation, the brutally repressed uprising in 1932, the various fraudulent elections since then, the present shape of the junta, and the names and initials of the various groups on the left and the right which, apart from the security forces and the USA, are the main protagonists in the present struggle.

It is not so strong on analysis, although it is not without some hints in the proper direction. But it is not enough merely to describe the glaring differences between rich and poor: it is necessary also to explain how and why this difference is there, and to recognise that it will continue to be there until the economic and power-relationships are radically altered. The Popular Organisations which Dr Keogh chides for not trying to give the junta a try in October 1979 were perhaps more aware of the realities than he is prepared to be.

The bibliography makes some useful suggestions. Omissions are: the *Pro Mundi Vita* Bulletin on the Church and the Ideology of National Security; Gheerbrant's Pelican book on the Rebel Church in Latin America; and the Medellin and Puebla con-

clusions which are obtainable from CIIR.

For a popular book the price is a bit daunting; for a serious book the cover is a bit garish and sensational. Activists should buy it and lend it to their friends.

COLIN CARR O P

**FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY** by Gerald O'Collins, *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1981 pp 283 £5.95

Dr O'Collins is already well-known for a number of short studies dealing with some of the basic issues in Christian theology in a manner that is both lively and well-informed. He has now set himself the task of writing a more 'substantial study in Christian fundamental theology' (p 1), with special emphasis on the themes of revelation, tradition and inspiration. The larger undertaking has not led to any great change in approach. The wide knowledge of contemporary theological writing is still in evidence, and the lively even conversational, style remains.

Before dealing directly with his three main themes, he emphasises the fundamental role of human experience in relation to the divine self-communication in Christ. His account of human experience is well done and helps the reader to recognise that what is at issue is not some reshuffling of old text book notions but a better understanding of the nature of the life of faith.

So the book promises well. And at one level it can be acknowledged as the sensitive reflections of a Christian scholar, aware of the problems posed to theology by the contemporary world, showing how they can be assimilated within the traditional structures of catholic faith. But at another level it disappoints. For although Dr O'Collins is aware of the problems theology has to face today, it appears sometimes as if he has not really felt on the pulses the full impact of their challenge. And so traditional answers are (with some modifications, it is true) continued or reinstated too comfortably for comfort. He speaks on occasion of the response of faith as involving confession, commitment and confidence. These are important character-

istics for a theologian and he has them in good measure; but the confidence seems at times to sweep all before it too quickly.

Let me illustrate the sort of ground that gives rise to these misgivings from three sections:

i Dr O'Collins takes a positive view of the saving significance of some non-christian religious practices. But he wants also to insist that such salvation is through Christ. In arguing his case he claims that it is a fruit of the incarnation that 'hereafter to know God through other men and women and through the world would be to know God through the incarnate Christ' (p 117). It may be that this is the right line along which to seek a solution of the problem, but a claim of that kind, not about the divine word but about the incarnate Christ, seems to me too easily asserted and to offer too cavalier an answer to the question.

ii On p 211 the Vincentian Canon ('That which has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone - this is truly and properly Catholic') is cited. On p 215 we are told that 'it could ultimately be rephrased this way: What we can discover to have been believed and practised *at least* sometimes, in some places and by some Christians as part of the good news and which promises once again to be *life-giving* - that can truly and properly direct our discernment of present traditions and experiences'. "Rephrased" seems something of an understatement.

iii The discussion of inspiration provides the most striking example. Dr O'Collins is no fundamentalist. He is as well aware as any of us of the ways in which the scriptural books came to be written, and of the varied forms of moral and religious atti-