

is the sort of thing we do say. My concern is to try to clarify our understanding of such a statement. That is a process of which Professor Lash does not, I think, disapprove. In a sense it is what he is up to in his chapter on Divine Providence. Certainly he rules out, as firmly as I would, some unsatisfactorily credulous or superstitious accounts of what it might mean. But when it comes to saying anything positive, he is at his most elusive. In the end we are encouraged to say simply 'these things were here . . . but the beholder is wanting' (p. 163). In effect he falls back on the language of poetry, a language akin to that of religious faith rather than of theological reflection. The difference between us on this issue seems to be that I have attempted to give a theoretical account of what faith language about particular acts of God might imply. I am far from satisfied with the account, but it was the best that I could do. He is even more dissatisfied, but offers no alternative. At this point, he is saying in effect, we must be content to let the language of faith stand unexplained; none of the reflective

accounts being offered do justice to what faith intuitively. I accept that as a reasonable response provided the struggle to understand is not to be proscribed. I am relieved to observe that it is only seeking "*prematurely* to 'behold' " (p. 163: my italics) that is condemned. To fall into that error, if that is what I have done, is part of the risk of theology – for like faith it too has its risks.

In short, I find in this book much that is sensitive, much that is pertinent to the contemporary task of theology. But it is not always easy to see just what its positive affirmations amount to. The subject matter of theology calls for a measure of elusiveness in the prosecution of the theological task. But elusiveness can be overdone and give rise to a 'theology without risks'. I hope that in the larger theological works to which we look forward from the Norris-Hulse chair the shape of his own theological proposals will become clearer as he pursues not only the risk-laden venture of faith but the risk-laden venture of theology also.

MAURICE WILES

THE NATURE OF MAN by Don Cupitt *Sheldon Press, 1979 £1.95*

This kind of romp through a vast subject is something on which reviewers are liable to be hard, forgetting how useful such a thing can be, when approached in the right frame of mind. Dr Cupitt has just the sort of genial brashness and omnivorous curiosity to carry the thing off. I found this book at once more thought-provoking, and much less wrong-headed, than its author's attempts at constructive theology.

After a peep into anthropology, there comes a sketch of the doctrines of man in the great religions. Dr Cupitt's view of early Christianity is prejudiced, but he disarms criticism by admitting as much; and certainly such a book as this is no place for protracted scholarly reservations and qualifications. Next there is an account of the atheist conception of man, and of how in modern times the religious conviction of human bondage has been twisted into the view that religion is itself a principal

cause of that bondage. I thought the distinction between seven types of atheism particularly useful. It was amusing to find a thumbnail sketch of the thought of Aquinas here. Dr Cupitt affects surprise at the manner in which that philosopher 'cheerfully distinguishes between the way things really are (*per se*) and the way they seem to us (*quoad nos*)' p. 50; but I can hardly believe that Dr Cupitt himself makes no such distinction, which the very existence of science might be said to presuppose. In fact he implies as much at the end of the book, when he very pertinently suggests that the self-transcendence implicit in man's capacity to know may provide a basis for a positive assessment of religion. There follows a look at contemporary accounts of human origins, man's similarities with and differences from other animals, and reactions of religious bodies to these. The author's irrepressible chirpiness was severely tested in his survey of the

gloomier productions of the worthies in the modern literary pantheon, from Dostoevsky to Beckett, but survived intact.

All in all, the book should be a fine stimulus for people embarking on courses

of religious studies; which is the purpose for which this series of 'Issues in Religious Studies' is designed.

HUGO MEYNELL

A HIDDEN REVOLUTION. The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within
by Ellis Rivkin, SPCK, 1979 pp. 336 £12.50

The Pharisees are very important both for Jewish and Christian scholarship, and yet current research has not reached any consensus about who they were. The amount published is really quite small, and for that reason alone any new book has value and attracts comment.

That is perhaps the most that can be said in defence of the present publication. It is a badly edited work written in an odd, indeed I hope unique, form of American English.

Above all it is important to point out that the position it adopts is idiosyncratic. Someone working on the New Testament might not be aware of this, and could be misled into thinking that here was the agreed position of contemporary Jewish scholarship. In fact, there is no such agreed position, rather a polarisation of opposing views, which some might connect with the names of Professors Mantel and Neusner. Dr Rivkin's book (and this is the meaning of the title) is concerned to prove that the Pharisees were "the most ardent advocates of the kingdom of God *within*. They were the grand *internalizers*" (p. 297, my italics). I put this thesis to a learned colleague at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, who reacted

with some vigour that if this was the hidden revolution of the Pharisees, it was very hidden indeed.

The publication of this work does not represent an advance in Jewish scholarship. I was alarmed to read on page 15 that it was "thirty-nine years aborning". It seems to me to mark a deterioration from Dr Rivkin's work of ten years ago. I would unhesitatingly recommend anyone to read his article in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* of 1969-1970 rather than buy this book, which in any case is in part a vulgarisation of the article. As a production it is aesthetically outrageous, and an ominous footnote declares that "to facilitate reading, diacritical marks for transliterated Hebrew have been omitted". This sentence is an absurdity because the purpose of diacritical marks is precisely to facilitate reading; and the same holds true of transliterated Greek because one can only distinguish *omicron* and *omega* here from the context. To lodge a couple of copies of this book in the copyright libraries would be quite adequate, and then the SPCK could ship the rest of the consignment back across the Atlantic.

RICHARD JUDD

CE QUE CROYAIT DOMINIQUE by P. R. Régamey *Mame, Paris. 1979 pp. 178 28F*

Père Régamey, a venerable French Dominican, is clearly one of those French theologians, like Danielous, Bouyer, Le Guillou, who are profoundly unhappy with the general drift of modern French Catholicism. His book is deliberately set on a collision course, and it is accordingly 'reactionary' and angry. But it would be a big mistake just to dismiss it as unthinking conservatism or refusal of Vatican II. What Régamey refuses is what he sees as a pre-

dominantly negative modern stance which is itself a refusal of essential values contained in Catholic tradition, especially those associated with the supernatural life of faith. He invites us to "refuse the refusal".

But he sees St Dominic as representing a very particular kind of refusal of the refusal. In his view, it is necessary for the would-be apostle of orthodoxy to know within himself why heresy is attractive,