

theism in a way which is not reductive, God does seem to be dissolved in this book. Now Paul Tillich many years ago criticised theism, in his own individual sense of 'theism', to make space for a God who does not exist, in his own individual sense of 'exist', and Tillich did this in order to make space (perhaps without realising it) for the traditional God of medieval theology. But Cupitt does not seem to be making space for God in any traditional sense of the word 'God'. He inevitably seems to have dissolved God in dissolving the world outside language, and as such I do not think that he can be anything other than reductionist.

Cupitt is, as the reader would expect, pluralist, though in practice, as he admits, he is only in a position to describe a plurality of Christian options. He is also relativist but he accepts the kind of criticism of relativism that Peter Berger suggested some years ago that to be a relativist is itself a relative position. So Don Cupitt accepts the relativity of his own relativist position with the result that he accepts the 'truth' (in what I would regard as an odd sense of that word) of all the religious positions that he has described and criticised in his sixteen-fold taxonomy. Even though a Metaphysical Realist (stage four) would condemn Don Cupitt's relativist pluralism with (I think) no God and certainly no life beyond the grave, Cupitt is bound to regard their's as an acceptable and true form of religion—relatively. Small wonder he says his book is ironic, for if truth resides everywhere it resides nowhere.

As a result it is difficult to get into a serious debate with Cupitt. If only one could find a specific issue that he regards as true or false in an absolute sense with which one could disagree. Indeed Cupitt is so nice and liberal and tolerant and condescending that it sets your teeth on edge.

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'IF CHRIST BE NOT RISEN...' ESSAYS IN RESURRECTION AND SURVIVAL.
Edited by Elizabeth Russell and John Greenhalgh (St. Mary's, Bourne Street,
London. 1986. £2.50.

This is the third in the series of *Tracts for Our Times*. A distinguished group of writers contributes on a variety of themes more or less focussed on resurrection and afterlife. The aim is the restatement of traditional Christian belief in a broadly Anglo-Catholic mode. Each essay is short and most attempt to make one or two clear points.

John Macquarrie opens the book with a competent presentation of the historical context of resurrection in Judaism, a discussion of its meaning which focusses on the the new integration of physical and spiritual in the 'spiritual body', and an argument for accepting faith in the resurrection on the grounds of testimony from the past and of present experience. He is the only contributor to take any major twentieth century theologians with a degree of seriousness—he briefly argues against Rudolf Bultmann, Gordon Kaufman and Edward Schillebeeckx. This is the piece that comes nearest to a theological overview of resurrection, and it succeeds to some extent—but it would have been good to have had some handling of the modern revival of eschatology and of the connection of resurrection with the understanding of the Trinity, the church and ethics.

The latter is, however, dealt with in a fascinating essay by Richard Harries, 'The resurrection in modern novels'. He faces the moral challenge of the resurrection: how can Christ's 'triumph over suffering be presented in a way that is sensitive to people experiencing "the deep and awful and irremediable things"? Or so that it does not take away from the profound effect of a Christ who shares our bitter anguish?' (p. 40) He argues that Tolstoy's *Resurrection* fails both as literature and as theology, but that Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*, Patrick White in *Riders in the Chariot* and William Golding in

Darkness Visible treat the theme of resurrection with more success. What that means is that they unite suffering and triumph in a way that is convincing both morally and as literature, and that they authentically describe a world in which a divine redemptive purpose is at work. Harries leaves us with a question well worth pursuing: why is it that so many today are drawn to a defeated Christ but not a victorious, glorified one?

Eric Mascall tackles the topic 'Did Jesus really rise from the dead?' by giving favourable reviews to two books, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective* by Pinchas Lapide and *Easter Enigma* by John Wenham, and then briefly summarizes the reasons for the importance of the empty tomb. Ulrich Simon makes a good, if limited, case for retaining the word 'soul' in our account of human beings. Elizabeth Briere gives a sensitive evocation of her own tradition in 'The resurrection in liturgical life in the Orthodox church'. Martin Israel gives moral and existential content to death, judgment, heaven and hell in a piece written in magisterial authoritative style—he is generally very traditional but cannot stomach eternal damnation for anyone. Brian Horne makes a wise case for purgatory as a humane and noble doctrine, and captures the spirit of Dante's *Purgatorio*: 'it is the "place", "state" or "process" in which freely, accepting the fire of the divine love, our whole selves learn what it is to experience true joy' (p. 100). There are two other contributions which do not quite fit: a previously unpublished sermon of W.H. Auden which is an all-too-brief meditation on his native element, 'Words and the Word', and an Afterword by Graham Leonard, Bishop of London, which rehearses some basic doctrinal points.

Overall the reader is left in no doubt about what he or she is invited to believe, and thus far the tract achieves part of its purpose. It would be wrong to criticize it as if it were a work of scholarship or of systematic or philosophical theology. Yet one has a right to expect of such authors more of a sense of the richness of what 'our times' have to offer their project. What about modern science and cosmology? What of the attempts to think through the implications of resurrection for our concept of God, for church and social life, for power and responsibility? They write as if nowhere within their horizon do Rahner, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Mackinnon, Torrance, Hans Urs von Balthasar (though he is mentioned once) or liberation theology appear. Apart from Harries and Macquarrie there is an antiquarian, provincial feel to the thought of the essays. Their concern is Catholic truth, but the great thinkers of that truth have been a good deal more inclusive, more contemporary and more daring than these. 'Our times' are either seen negatively (without any penetrating critique) or ignored. Such a book can give needed encouragement to those shaken by recent controversies. But, paradoxically for a Catholic work, what it most lacks is a vision of the resurrection as the power behind a movement and community deeply involved in two millennia of history and with a worldwide presence. The resurrection appearances do not figure as occasions of calling to a dangerous vocation in history, to share in anticipating the consummation of history in community life and prophetic ministry.

For the disciples, the resurrection was an event that interrupted the old age with the new, and the Holy Spirit brought a taste of God's future into the present. In many of these essays the dominant sense is of the past being continued with integrity and intelligence, but one longs for more of that sense of God's future breaking in and doing new things. Or, to put the point in more theological terms, how can the important lessons of contemporary eschatology be learnt from those who encourage us to enter the future *in this world* looking so steadily backwards?

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