

have more to offer in terms of equality and participation.

The following discussion of the use of violence by popular organisations suggests that such use of violence, while justified in the traditional teaching of the church on the "just insurrection", is equally justifiable simply in terms of self-defence, such is the level of violence directed against the poor. But he is not only concerned with justifying revolutionary violence as such, the "ius in bellum", but also offers useful guidelines as to the kind of violence that is to be regarded as permissible, the "ius ad bello", making the very important distinction between insurrection and terrorism. This is followed by a discussion of human rights which presents another challenge to the liberal western view, in which Berryman argues that there is a hierarchy of rights, some rights being prior to others, and this must be borne in mind when we are tempted to be overly critical of revolutionary movements. This discussion has successfully "unpacked" some of the issues that most disturb western observers of the Central American revolutionary process, and answers many of the objections that are raised against it.

Berryman offers a series of reflections on the Church's commitment to the poor, her relationship to the popular and revolutionary organisations, the role of political theory in the Church and the use of Marxist tools of analysis by Christians. In conclusion, a discussion of some theological aspects of the revolutions, the idea of "social sin", the need to extend the idea of personal conversion to that of a collective "conversion of the Church" to a preferential option for the poor, and the profound Christocentricity of liberation theology (perhaps in its defence against its critics who accuse it of "ideologising" the faith).

This book should have a wide readership, not just among those readers of liberation theologians who wish to gain some insight into the background to their writings, but also those who are deeply suspicious of what they see as a heterodox theological development—they may be surprised at just how orthodox and traditional this movement is. It should also be of interest to people working in the many Latin American solidarity organisations and human rights groups in Britain and North America, many of whom suffer from an ideological sclerosis that renders them incapable of seeing Christianity as anything other than a force of reaction.

GILBERT MÁRKUS OP

FROM DARKNESS TO THE DAWN by Anton Van Der Walle (Tr. John Bowden),
SCM Press 1984 pp.261. £8.95.

This book is by a Dominican Prior who is acutely sensitive of the difficulties facing belief in life after death today and who wrestles with the task of reinterpreting the doctrine in terms which he hopes will speak to the contemporary believer. He is conscious of how strongly modern science endorses the ancient Hebrew view of man as a psychosomatic unity and believes that in the light of this knowledge, the immortality of the soul is "scientifically impossible" (p. 25). At the same time he believes that once we appreciate the enormous extension of the human race, we must realise that "any conception of a resurrection of the body, coupled with some thought of material identity, is sheer nonsense" (p. 26). He realises that his views break with tradition but he holds that the New Testament's "hopelessly mistaken conceptions" about the Universe are "in no way binding" (p. 132), and that even though the latest pronouncement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith endorses the concept of the soul "we must be clear from the start that the teaching office of the Church cannot make any binding pronouncements on a scientific or philosophical anthropology as such" (pp. 25 and 159).

However, Fr Van der Walle seeks to write as a believer whose purpose is to liberate the message of the resurrection from its classical mode of presentation, in order to make "the notion of life after death at least comprehensible to modern educated readers" (cover). He insists that life after death must be recognised as a religious belief

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rather than a scientific hypothesis, for "the subject matter of eschatology contains answers which will only satisfy the questions of a believer" (p. 146). Only to a believer is God real, and the reality of God is the sole foundation for belief in a future life and indeed constitutes that life: "by faith is God discovered as a future beyond death" (p. 147). In fact Van der Walle argues that all words associated with our future destiny are in reality ways of talking about God. Thus "heaven" and "eternal life" are "synonyms for God" (p. 29), "'resurrection of the dead' is a paraphrase of the word 'God'" (p. 164). "'Purgatory' is God who goes through us to purify us, and 'Hell' is God as the opportunity we have lost" (p. 220).

The difficulty with this approach is that language is not a private possession such that we can simply declare words to be synonymous. Words are the common property of a linguistic community. And it is easy to demonstrate that all the phrases which Van der Walle calls "synonyms for God" have a long history of use within the community of faith to refer not to God, but to a supposed future life after death, and all discussion must cease if it becomes impossible to differentiate between different affirmations of faith.

However, to claim that after death we live in God is a potentially significant claim, but what does it mean? One possibility is that we live on in the same sense that God who lives in us is eternal and therefore in so far as we are indwelt by him we participate in his eternity: "our limitations do not exist for the one who lives in us" (p. 188). Another possibility is that we live on in the sense that God remembers us and "to be remembered by God, to have my consciousness sustained by the Supreme Consciousness, is not that, perhaps, to be?" (p. 166). However, neither of these possibilities offers genuine immortality, which Van der Walle insists must consist in the continued life of the "human subject with his or her own awareness, relationships and personal activity" (p. 166), and where the "dead live as the same people they were before death" (p. 190).

But how can I be the same person if, as the author claims, "the bodily resurrection" in which I am to partake has "no material character" and the heaven in which I am to dwell is not "a place"? (p. 190). Moreover if my destiny is solely to abide in God and find fulfilment through "knowledge of God...interpreted in terms of mystical union" (p. 192), why talk of a "body" at all? Such a destiny seems to correspond exactly with what was formerly expected for man as an immortal soul. If Van der Walle responds, as his book constantly asserts, "I need a body because I am essentially a psycho-somatic unity" then one can only respond that a non-material non-spatial non-locatable "body" is just as contrary to such a picture as any concept of the soul.

The blunt fact is that there is no middle path to follow. If neither the resurrection of the body nor the immortality of the soul are credible, then death means extinction. God endures for ever but we perish as though we had never been. This conclusion is not inevitable, for both the traditional beliefs can be articulated and defended today. But the construction of such a defence is not the task assayed in the present work.

PAUL BADHAM

THE PROMISE OF NARRATIVE THEOLOGY by George W. Stroup. SCM 1984, John Knox Press 1981, 288 pp., £7.95.

'During the last ten years a new approach to theological reflection has emerged under the rubric of "narrative theology". As is the case with most new proposals in theology it remains to be seen whether narrative theology is only another fad in theological discussion or whether it is a substantive contribution to the task of making Christian faith intelligible in the modern world. ... For some time it has seemed to me that the use of narrative in theology provides rich possibilities for understanding and interpreting the content of Christian faith'. (p. 6)

George Stroup's gently argued and persuasive book strikes me as one of the most