

**THE MAKING OF MODERN GERMAN CHRISTOLOGY. From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg by Alister E. McGrath, Blackwell, 1986. Pp 231. £19.50**

Beginning with the Enlightenment and Schleiermacher's response to it, this book moves in eight stages to the christology of Moltmann and Jüngel. The chapters, each of which represents an episode in what is seen as a fairly straightforward historical progression (see p. 115), present the christology against its background, with theology in general and christology in particular being given fairly equal attention. The result is that exposition and criticism are fairly summary, so that the study will be most useful as a text-book introduction to the main theologians and movements.

As a text-book however, it will have to be used with caution. Dr McGrath makes a number of assumptions which will not command universal assent, but which give the exposition its shape and character. One is that he clearly believes that German theology not only follows a distinct path from English—which he means strictly and not in the sense of 'English language'—but is also immeasurably superior. '... England has never produced any theologians of consequence since William of Ockham' (p. 5) is not the most judicious of the historical and theological judgements to be found in this book. While there may, and certainly would, be argument about the claim of Newman to be among the consequent, there is a strong case for saying that the theological legacy of Coleridge is more important than that of many given star billing in this book. Whatever the strengths of Germany, and they are not to be denied, appreciation is not aided by holding the two traditions apart in this way.

Another feature of the book is its tendency to suggest that later means better. The way the final chapter ends with celebration of Moltmann and Jüngel tends to obscure the (acknowledged) weaknesses of two, and misses the point that their christology tends to lack engagement with the theology of atonement, one area where English christology did, until recently, tend to be stronger. A third point is related to this, and it is that the author tends to assume that the most important and creative theology is that which responds to a certain kind of question asked by the Enlightenment. (Here he could have learned much from Coleridge.) In other words, the meaning of the word *modern* is loaded, with the result that Dr McGrath treats Bultmann and Ebeling as being of equal, or even greater, significance than Barth. While this may be arguable, the ignorance of the text of Barth revealed here is not so excusable. If the author had read the treatments of sin as pride and sloth in the main christological sections of the *Church Dogmatics*, could he have made the egregious claim 'that Barth's doctrine of the person and work of Christ makes no reference to any engagement with sin or evil (unless these are understood in the epistemically reduced sense of human 'ignorance' or 'confusion'...)'(p. 112)?

For the reader aware of its dominating assumptions, this book will prove a useful guide. There is much learning, and a wealth of biographical information. Exposition and criticism are set out clearly and are for the most part accurate. German theology has indeed made the running over recent centuries, even if the picture is more complicated than is here suggested.

COLIN GUNTON

**THE CHRIST AND THE FAITHS. THEOLOGY IN CROSS REFERENCE by K. Cragg. SPCK, London, 1986. £13.50**

Kenneth Cragg's book is a useful addition to the literature on Christianity's relationship with other faiths. Cragg is a respected authority on Islam and has written extensively on Christian-Muslim relations. In this book he extends his reflections to Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as Islam. If theology confines itself to its traditional 'territorial waters' it will lose its authenticity. Hence Cragg casts out into 'open seas'. The journey is exciting,

although at times the reader may drown in Cragg's difficult prose. If he or she survives, there is much fish for thought! His underlying conviction is that through this journey whereby Christ is interrogated by other faiths, the positive and critical relation of Christ to the faiths will therein be clarified.

In four sections he then takes up crucial areas of contact and difference between Christianity and another religion, attempting to relate Christ to the faiths through these zones of cross reference. With Islam, he explores the commonality of belief in divine transcendence and sovereignty, focusing upon the incarnation which affirms these qualities for Christianity and negates them for Islam. There is a sensitive section on prophethood and incarnation and a bold criticism of Islamic theocracy. Although Cragg writes with sympathy and respect, he never stops short of highlighting central difficulties and challenges posed by Christianity to other faiths. For this we should be grateful. Those from other religions will not always concur with his descriptions or his evaluations, but this is perhaps inevitable.

In the section on 'Jewry', Cragg goes to the heart of the matter with some stimulating insights on the notion of messiah and peoplehood. Cragg steers through a veritable minefield, defending the New Testament from the charge of anti-Semitism while retaining messianic claims (in the 'suffering servant' tradition). While he rightly criticises the theory of 'two covenants' put forward by Parkes, Eckardt, and most recently Van Buren, his own reasons to affirm 'the continuing authenticity of Judaism' are spelt out too thinly in only three pages. Too much is left ambiguous. He criticises St Paul's 'tortured logic' in Romans 9–11, yet ends up propounding something very similar to the two covenant school's reading of Romans.

In the third section on Hinduism, Cragg deals with the challenge posed to the singularity of the Christ event—and thereby to notions of history and conversion. Here he develops a type of Logos Christology whereby redemptive suffering, shaped by a response to Jesus even outside the visible Christian community, partakes of the Christ event. Ghandi is not uncritically called to the witness box. It seems that multiple Christologies are permissible if they are tethered to the one person of Jesus. However, I found a certain ambiguity in this chapter when Cragg criticises Rahner's theory of the 'anonymous Christian' and goes on to suggest an alternative: the 'associate Christian'—when one discerns 'a will for Jesus but in disassociation from institutes, doctrinal and historical, which traditionally belong to him' (218). I am not sure whether this is an explicit or implicit will. If the latter, then his position is not dissimilar to Rahner's. If the former, then the thrust of his Logos Christology is severely curtailed. Cragg seems to affirm that there can be partial revelations in the history of religions of what is most fully revealed in Jesus.

The final chapter on Buddhism deals with the doctrine of *anatta*, exploring the vital distinctions between selfhood and selfishness. Cragg finds a further and important cross reference in the Buddha's injunction to compassion. This section, more than the others, also reflects Cragg's literary interests and his use of Keat's notion of negative capability is most illuminating.

Some readers may find that Cragg's evaluation of other religions lacks a certain ability to remain in uncertainty and mystery as his criticisms are uncompromising (and incisive). These are early days to assess the manner in which systematic theology will be changed through Christianity's encounter with non-Christian religions but Cragg's book is testimony to a process already in motion.

GAVIN D'COSTA