

some sort of institution to 'transmit the tradition', but she has no time for what we have at the moment. The apostolic claims of papacy and episcopacy are dismissed, the idea of permanent ordination for the exercise of sacramental functions is abandoned. All have these powers by virtue of being Christians. In a particular context a member of the community is 'ordained' to represent God and our brother; in another context someone else and so on. Parishes are out, of course, but it is not too clear what replaces them except the 'happening' of a new Christian community arising where 'Christians meeting together find a new consciousness and a new being through and in each other'. It is a little disturbing to find that 'the university is a natural setting for this development'. Rather rough on most of us! One feels that it is in universities that this book will find its warmest welcome.

Another disturbing feature is a rather patronizing tone which creeps in here and

there. The Christian, we are told, 'endures the non-event of Church assemblies as part of his bearing of the dying form of this alienated world'. Surely he could do better than endure? Allow the Spirit to work through him, perhaps? Mrs Ruether seems to forget that the Spirit can transform even the most unpromising material. We do not need to destroy everything in spite of the mess we are in. Mrs Ruether's ideas are worth pondering but let's keep our heads. There is discontinuity, but things are never quite as discontinuous as they seem. Inevitably we build on the past, albeit on its ruins. It is quite possible to be radical and believe this. And it spares us the necessity of pouring scorn on 'stone cathedrals, jewelled monstrances and infallible doctrines'. Disposable things, yes; but 'false reflexions of the value and fidelity of God'? No; I do not believe either that our predecessors were quite so utterly wrong in their time or that we compared with them are so utterly right.

GEOFFREY PONTON

**THE EMERGENCE OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**, by James Collins. *Yale University Press*. 1967. 90s.

The philosophical concept of religion revolves around the human significance of religious experience as an element in our personal and social existence. The philosophy of religion seeks to elucidate the humanistic content of man's religious relationship with God. The problem is not so much the existence of God, or whether his existence can be rationally demonstrated, or whether he has revealed himself to man as a loving and saving God. The real issue is more intimate to man's existential preoccupation. Assuming that the traditional questions of natural theology should be answered in the affirmative, these answers must still be 'religionized'. Then comes a further problem: what is the relevance of it all to man's experience of himself and of the world? It is in this sense that the God-problem in modern philosophy is subordinate to the religious-problem. The basic issue is one of existential relevance.

The emergence of the philosophy of religion as a special discipline dates from 1730: from Hume's early reflexions on natural religion. The climax was reached in 1830 with Hegel's last course of lectures on religion in the university of Berlin. Kant's Copernican revolu-

tion came in the middle of those hundred years. Admittedly, much preparatory work had already been done during the seventeenth century by Spinoza, Leibniz and the English Deists. But Hume, Kant and Hegel deserve to be regarded as pioneers in the modern philosophical interpretation of religion mainly because of the orientation they have given to subsequent developments. More recent philosophers of religion will see the problem in a different light. They will be influenced by the progressive secularization of modern society. They will have at their disposal all the recent discoveries of psychology and the social sciences. But they cannot afford to ignore the unique contribution made by the three classical thinkers in the philosophical evaluation of man's religious experience.

Hume's conviction that morality is independent of religion may strike us as symptomatic of the classical tendency to isolate different areas of human experience. Actually, most thoughtful men at the time favoured the severance of religion and morality. Recent history had shown that religion is not necessarily beneficial to morals. Hume had theoretical reasons as well. The God of the theologians is not moral in the

# THE NEW VOICE FROM LIVERPOOL

## Sebastian Moore

He wrote the "shattering"  
**God is a New Language**  
a book about love and death and  
God that "stands the world on its  
head".

He has now written



## No Exit

People talk about "biblical theology"—here it is: alive and exciting, challenging all assumptions about what life is like, involving every man in the gospel and crucifixion. **12s 6d**

**DARTON LONGMAN & TODD**

same way that man is moral. He cannot therefore be the object of man's moral or religious response. But Hume was sufficiently perceptive of historical reality to realize that religion plays an important role for better or for worse in our social and personal existence. That is why he rehabilitated the method of dialogue in his philosophy of religion. The method was a useful technique in thematizing the many ramifications of belief, creed and cult. Philosophically speaking all these considerations are secondary. The distinctive feature of Hume's approach is its preoccupation with religion as a technique in the empirical study of man. Religion has its roots in certain instincts constitutive of human reality: the passional instincts of fear and hope. If this is so, then the study of human nature must comprise an enquiry into man's religious instincts and the manner of their expression. Whereas the traditional approach was focussed exclusively on the object of religious conviction, Hume is more interested in the passional dynamics of religious belief. Besides, since our conception of human nature changes from epoch to epoch there may be a practical possibility of redirecting man's religious tendencies in other directions more attuned to present realities. The final result might well be the total elimination of religion. This pragmatic and reformist approach explains the inherent ambiguity in Hume's usage of 'natural' religion. The religious impulse is not natural in the sense of being an irreducible natural propensity. It is a relatively derivative aspect of our affective life, an aspect whose direction is largely conditioned by social pressures. In that case religion can be transformed, purified by means of a critical enquiry into its origins and its rational justification. When the criticism has been carried through we are left with a 'philosopher's religion', which is nothing more than an impersonal intellectual assent to the possibility of a provident God. Such an assent is so detached as to have no bearing on morals or on life. It is existentially sterile.

'Cyclopiam' is the term used by Kant to designate the intellectual malady of civilized man: the specialization of human energies at the cost of a general vision. The other-worldly religion of academic theologians succumbs to this sort of cyclopic specialization. We are presented with a transcendent entity out there beyond our world, remote from the world of moral endeavour and religious piety, the desiccated inference of abstract logic.

Kant's 'ectypal theology' is an attempt to bring the God of religion into a meaningful connexion with man's being-in-the-world, an attempt to gain access to God across the experienced reality of nature, to give to religion a moral and aesthetic substructure. It is by 'cultivating our own garden' in the world that we find the living and saving reality of God. Any other approach is simply a 'transcendental illusion'. By giving this sort of practical basis to the theory of God, Kant managed to 'religionize' theology. He also succeeded in bringing the religious outlook into a meaningful relationship with his philosophy of human experience as a whole, in the field of science, morality and art. His religion engages the totality of human energies and his theory of religion is integrated into his critical philosophy as a whole. This gives us the two guiding principles of the Kantian conception of religion: what is absolutely necessary is 'to convince oneself of the existence of God, it is not necessary that one should demonstrate it'; and one should not say 'it is morally certain that there is a God . . . but I am morally certain that there is a God'. This kind of personal conviction based on moral sentiment is the prerogative of the truly religious man. Kant's well-known epistemological and religious criticism of traditional speculations about God is motivated by his conviction that they lack a proper anthropology of human experience. Such speculations can never lead us to the God of religious worship. His own minimal conception of religion as 'the recognition of all duties as if they were divine commands' stems from this desire to existentialize theology. He is not moralizing religion. He is trying to humanize it. Likewise his maximal conception of religion as allowing membership of a visible church and participation in its 'statutory' rites carries the important proviso—in so far as it makes our religious assent more living and corporately more responsible.

In contrast to Hume's scepticism concerning revealed and popular religion Kant cautiously reinstated religious experiences as such as a comforting complementation to his categorical imperative. It was left to Hegel to make the restoration complete. Unlike Hume or Kant, Hegel was a trained theologian for whom religion was a life-long problem. There is some truth in characterizing his whole system as a 'laicized theology'. But his procedure is philosophical in his attempt to explain the religious phenomenon in terms of its social

determinants. The cultural process is the starting point for any philosophy of religion, not the Humean percipient man nor the Kantian moral subject. This is a good illustration of Hegel's interest in religion as a social drive in human endeavour. Whereas Kant looked upon Christianity as the 'most moral' of all historical religions, Hegel attributed to Christianity the sort of intellectual development in which men in community have finally become aware of their own subjectivity. But the problem does not end there as far as modern man is concerned. The Enlightenment raised the question whether man's self-awareness has now outgrown the existing forms of Christian faith and worship, or even outgrown the religious spirit entirely. Hegel's theory of religion is his answer to that question. Though his answer passed through various formulations and developments, it was always in the negative. His early fulminations against Judaeo-Christianity are motivated by his vision of a Christian religion free from all positivity, purified of ritualized conventions; a religion which would make men free, public-spirited and at home with life and with nature. The death of God theme in Hegel's system designates the declining belief in God and in Christianity, the lack of conviction engendered in people's minds by traditional 'proofs' in natural theology and the pseudo-explanations of dogmatic theology. As Hegel saw it, academic theologians were simply prolonging the tragic events on Calvary. Their abstract reasoning prevented them from seeing the redemptive power of the negative, that is, of Good Friday, and thus making the dialectical transition to the positive, that is, to Easter Sunday. The theologians are simply victims of the general positivity. Unlike Marx, therefore, Hegel did not regard alienation as something inevitable in religion. He saw cleavage and alienation as the consequences of religious positivity. It was Hegel's lifelong conviction that religion, and the Christian religion in particular, has a part to play in man's awareness of himself and of his role in the dialectical evolution of the spirit of history.

The work under review expounds and correlates the views of these three classical philosophers of religion. It presupposes a rather specialized understanding, especially of Kant and Hegel. Even then it does not make easy reading. But anyone willing to pay the price (90s.) will have a monumental work to stimulate his mind.

NICHOLAS FOLAN, O.P.