

not have been asked to review it!) The biblical text is used rather to support an argument that begins some distance from this intriguing page of the Hebrew Scriptures, and it is not Murray's point to assist the strictly scholarly understanding of this most absorbing of prophetic pages.

These reflections occupy fifty-four small-sized pages and are divided into three sections, as follows. (i) Obedience to the Word: the lesson of the wild storm; (ii) In the Belly of Paradox: the lesson of the great whale; and (iii) Compassion without Limit: the lesson of the wondrous plant. The author calls on literary and artistic references to Jonah and shapes the evidence of what is a kind of anecdotal card index into a pleasant yet challenging attempt to identify humanity's bewilderment and seek a spiritual path through it, not around it. This 'fishy' story, redolent of Mediterranean folklore, is used by Murray to thread a path through many contemporary concerns and 'spiritualities'. The path indicated by Murray is deeply Christian, and offers hope to the reader's searching soul. Helpful also is the inclusion at the back of the book of the entire text of the Book of Jonah, in the New American Bible version.

Modern questions are raised here, or rather are shown not to be that modern after all. Jonah is still alive and somewhere about... and so is the great fish... with an ocean of meanings and adaptations at the ready. Murray does not indicate whether this material has been tried in the context of a retreat – but I believe hearing it would leave other retreat masters green with envy at how spiritual profundity is worn so lightly, and with Irish humour. The precise attention to and care for words, so noted in Murray's poetry, is not less evident in his prose.

In conclusion, let me signal also a more recent gem from Paul Murray: his *Preachers at Prayer*, published in Dublin this year by Dominican Publications. This beautifully produced slim volume brings to a wider audience an address delivered by Murray at the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, in 2001. The theme is contemplation, as practised by Dominicans down the centuries, and how their understanding of it has shaped their preaching ministry.

THOMAS McCARTHY OP

FAITH SEEKING by Denys Turner, *SCM Press, London 2002, Pp. xiii + 146, £9.95 pbk.*

The tantalisingly ambiguous and perhaps incomplete title draws us to a collection of lectures and sermons by the current Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity in Cambridge which in turn fascinate, entertain and occasionally frustrate but which, more often than not, take us a step towards the understanding that Anselm himself prayed for. The

collection might equally have been called 'How to do Theology' because a run of the papers are titled 'How to...': How to be an Atheist, How to be a Heretic, How to be 'Other', How to Kill People, How to be Tempted, How to be Distracted, and best of all How not to Pray. In the Preface, the author says that one of his prime aims has been to convince audiences 'that intellect is a form of *life*, a necessary way of being *alive*, and that therefore doing theology is a way of being alive as a Christian, intrinsic to a Christian vocation'. He has, then, an interest in the spirituality of the intellect.

The first chapter, 'How to be an Atheist', is Professor Turner's inaugural lecture at Cambridge in which he shows that most atheists do little more than deny what they take theists to affirm, that there exists a God: a supreme being that is all-knowing etc. 'Alas, today', he writes, 'vigorous atheist opposition is hard to find, and I wish to help out'. His idea of helping out is to suggest that the debate between theist and atheist is just too cosy because both sides often misconceive what they are talking about. This becomes a pretext for an exposition of a traditional Thomist understanding of what we are talking about when we talk of 'God', much in the way of Herbert McCabe that many of the readers of this journal will be familiar with and will probably be sympathetic towards. God is not an item within the world (or indeed outside it), God is the cause of it. There is a brief discussion of the difficulty of using 'cause' here where God's causing the world to exist is unlike any cause we might understand in the observable world. And of the phrase 'out of' when we speak of God creating the world 'out of nothing' when there is nothing for it to be created out of. The author pushes the point hard that we do not know what God is like so that, when we argue whether God exists, we are not debating whether a known being exists. To affirm the nature of God does not make any difference to the world we live in, but it makes every difference to how we understand that world. For the theist, the world is created, it is a gift, an act of 'a sort of love'.

In the end, the difference between the theist and the atheist is whether it is legitimate to ask a certain kind of question. 'Why does our world exist rather than nothing?'. It is an awkward and, as the author suggests, a child-like question, but as Frederick Copleston insisted to Bertrand Russell, it is an intelligible question. So to be an atheist, you have to refuse to ask awkward questions. 'It is not easy; you need to work at it. Be intellectually adult, get an education, get yourself a discipline; resist all temptations to ask such questions as you do not know in principle can be answered, being careful to suppress any which might seem to push thought off civilized limits...'

Elsewhere Professor Turner toys with the claims of Postmodernism or rather its refusal to make any claims (apart from its claim that there are no ultimate claims to be made). He is surprisingly sympathetic to Postmodernism in suggesting that there

is only a hair's breadth of difference between it and Christianity in its recognition of the gratuitousness of our world, that beyond it there is nothing and that in the end we cannot know the world. But there remains a difference that is everything. For the Christian, we are not able to understand the world's existing; for the Postmodernist, there is nothing to be understood. For the Postmodernist, the world is gratuitous; for the Christian it comes as a gift, an act of love. In the end the author is not really sympathetic to Postmodernism as he calls it a 'cynical corruption of intellect'. But he does recognise symmetries with Christianity.

The author is very good on parties and eating, but especially good on prayer (chapters 12 and 14). How not to Pray and How to be Distracted contain some of the wisest and most reassuring comments on prayer that I have come across, though I can hardly claim any expertise in this area which, paradoxically, is what the author said of himself to the seminarians he had been invited to address. He takes his cue from Paul that we do not know how to pray and he adds that praying, by the very nature of the activity, is never something we can be good at. The biggest danger is effortfulness, for the more we try to master the techniques of prayer the harder we will find it to express our deepest desires and simply trust God. And our deepest desires express themselves in distractions during prayer. Certainly the wish to banish effortfulness fits nicely with Paul's own theology of justification.

Not all the papers here are equally inspired, though no doubt different papers will appeal to different readers. Some of the sermons seem weird as *sermons*. But usually they are written with wit. Always there is the possibility of the unpredictable thought, as when a sermon on Remembrance Sunday is turned into a fierce examination of our social conscience. And nowhere did I glimpse the 'proneness to depression' and 'chronic sadness' that the author says is the lot of the intellectual. This theological miscellany, then, is a rewarding intellectual and spiritual investment.

GEOFFREY TURNER

RESTORING FAITH IN REASON With a new translation of the Encyclical Letter *Faith and Reason* of Pope John Paul II together with a commentary and discussion, eds. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, *SCM Press*, London, 2002, Pp.xii + 308, £16.95 pbk.

As the title suggests the editors wish to provide a book that will contribute to John Paul II's summons, contained within his monumental encyclical, *Faith and Reason*, to restore faith in reason's ability to obtain the truth – the truth grasped by reason itself and the truth offered to reason by God's revelation. The first part of