

analysis of religion. This latter suggestion may not seem to take theology very far, but, although Pannenberg's ideas fall into a unified theological scheme, it is typical of these essays that, while generally succeeding in making some significant advance, he always introduces us to a wider unexplored area, and in this he admirably illustrates the theological project.

The translator has done a difficult job pretty well, though the reader will find occasional American expressions and frequent American

spellings. There are the customary misprints, the oddest of which is on page 223, where 'This why is . . .' should read 'This is why. . .'. It has already been mentioned that this book is just half the original German edition, and those who read the review of Volume 1 by Professor Macquarrie will have noticed that that cost £2.10. This volume costs £3, which is inflation at the rate of 43 per cent over twelve months.

GEOFFREY TURNER

RESURRECTION: A SYMBOL OF HOPE, by Lloyd Geering. *Hodder and Stoughton*. 256 pp. £2.25.

One doesn't have to be an arch conservative to find so much 'liberal theology' boring and inconsequential. There is a formula through the use of which books of liberal theology can write themselves: choose a theme, caricature the tradition of it, pillory that caricature, and finish the book with a flourish of rhetoric and Existentialist-sounding slogans. This is roughly the scheme followed in this book in which Professor Lloyd Geering wants to show that the traditional understanding of Resurrection has died and to offer an alternative understanding. 'Bodily resurrection' is the great bogey, but can Geering really expect to be taken seriously when he spends a good deal of his book attacking the concept of 'bodily resurrection' without making any effort whatsoever to examine or discuss philosophically what is meant by 'bodilyness'?

Geering begins by showing the bankruptcy of the traditional understanding of Jesus' resurrection and it is worthwhile quoting at some length his summary of what he thinks that understanding to be:

The resurrection of Jesus began when life miraculously returned to the dead body of Jesus so that he once again became a conscious living being, the same Jesus who had died on the cross. He rose from the position where he had been laid, disentangling himself sufficiently from the linen cloths in which his body had been swathed to enable him to walk. Then he walked out of the tomb, from the mouth of which the customary round stone had been rolled aside by unseen forces. During the period of the next forty days the risen Jesus was seen and recognized in this form by his disciples.

This traditional view, he says (pp. 18, 19), was held with conviction from the end of the first century right down to the modern period. His support for this extraordinary statement is from two Anglican documents of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries and what he calls 'documents like this'—totally unspecified. The tradition has often been ambiguous, sometimes even somewhat awry, but Geering's caricature is facile, tendentious and silly. In fact 'silly' can describe many things about this book. It is silly to maintain that by 'mythological' we mean 'that unseen world, intangible to man, from which angels and evil spirits are thought to exert their mysterious influences upon man. . . . Its weakness is that depending so much on the human imagination, it can quickly move out of touch with the objective real world.' (p. 24). It is silly to state that 'when man reaches the limits of his empirical knowledge about himself and his world, he confesses his faith, or his response of life, in the form of myth and poetry' (p. 197)—as though myth and poetry were purely provisional kinds of knowledge simply waiting for empirical knowledge to catch up. It is also silly to say that historical events take place 'in an observable world of space and time, where they may be witnessed by all who happen to be in the vicinity. There is always something public and open about an historical event in that anyone could have seen it, if only he had been there' (p. 24). Which historical events is he thinking of? Vietnam? Ulster? Jesus himself? (cf. John 7, 12). Unfortunately for historical empiricists like Professor Geering, there are no 'facts' about historical events, only *truth* which some people can see and some can't no matter how close they are to the situation.

In part II Geering sketches the origins and development of the idiom of resurrection: as a task not at all a silly thing to do. But he places himself in a very odd position. Having said on page 17 that concepts are usually older than the words which are created to signify them (sloppily put, but one can see what is meant), he then goes on to say: 'But we cannot adequately trace the development

of the concept of resurrection, if we already have a preconceived idea of what the word means.' It's easy to see how we can perhaps trace the development in the meaning of a word without constricting ourselves by any preconceptions as to that word's meaning, but it is surely impossible to trace the meaning of a concept behind its verbal expression without having any preconceptions of its meaning. Otherwise, how would we know we had come across that concept? Be that as it may, Lloyd Geering has a go and presents very well plenty of the familiar stuff on rhythm of the seasons, dying and rising gods, and fertility cults. But behind every liberal theologian there lurks a Monty Python and silliness cannot be resisted even here: 'Ancient man could not help but notice that mating and marriage held the key to new life by means of regeneration, at least in the world of living creatures' (p. 82). Clever, perspicacious ancient man.

It is in his discussion of the New Testament that he begs the most questions, only some of which can be raised here. I think he badly underestimates (and misunderstands the nature of) the sense of Jesus' defeat and failure which the disciples must have suffered after his death. Their sense of his failure was not produced simply because Jesus was a good, attractive man, but, as Wilckens and Pannenberg have shown, because of the nature of the claims he was making—i.e. that he was acting and speaking with the authority of none other than God himself; a claim which by its nature required confirmation by God. If the final historical statement about Jesus is his crucifixion then in Jewish eyes (and therefore for the disciples too) he was a failure. In which case his sublime teaching and his personal magnetism are in the end irrelevant. After all, there have been many men whose personal magnetism has been considerable (perhaps even greater than Jesus') but none of their disciples have so far claimed them as raised from the dead or even vindicated by God. Thus preaching 'the cross' was contentless without its significance (through vindication) being mediated to the apostles and Paul.

Luke comes in for the worst treatment, since for Geering it is Luke who is mainly responsible for producing in the tradition the crudely physical understanding of the resurrection of Jesus. Thus in the Emmaus story of Luke 24, 'Jesus is described as appearing to the two disciples very much as he might have done during his earthly ministry' (p. 165). 'The

pre-crucified Jesus was completely restored, the only difference being that he could now appear and disappear at will. . . . For Luke, . . . the resurrection of Jesus had virtually become the resuscitation of the physical body' (p. 166). It is difficult to know what one can say briefly about those sort of statements, but as far as the first is concerned, if true, then it seems very odd that Luke is at pains to show that the disciples didn't recognize Jesus until *he* took the initiative and *revealed* himself to them. Surely Geering knows that Luke's resurrection narratives are deeply theological and can't be treated with the facile and crude literalism that his objections betray. Luke is after all concerned with the exegesis of a mystery, and one of his themes is the continuity-discontinuity/identity-transformation of the crucified Jesus and the risen Christ, and it is verging on silliness to say that for Luke 'Resurrection was now the event in which Jesus left the tomb to show himself to the disciples' (p. 166). In discussing resurrection and the Fourth Gospel, either he believes, quoting C. H. Dodd, that for John the resurrection hadn't precisely the same significance that it had for some other writers, or believes in his own words that 'In John it is the risen Christ who speaks and acts *almost throughout the Gospel*' (p. 167, his italics)—some explanation is needed to reconcile both positions.

So what in the end is the meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus, and what hope does this idiom excite in us? Certainly for Geering this meaning can no longer be located in 'bodily resurrection' (p. 217); rather the proclamation 'Jesus is risen' seems to mean that the teaching, life and manner of the death of Jesus still has a power to attract men and to challenge and give meaning to their lives. But of course there is a sense in which the same can be said of Shakespeare, Ghandi and Che Guevara. Perhaps Geering thinks that, too, for he says 'there is a sense, in which, for Christians, Jesus has actually embodied in himself all the hope that man has ever associated with this idiom (of resurrection)' (p. 219). Only *a* sense? which sense? and in which sense hasn't he? Geering is anxious to shun all traditional Christian hopes of resurrection as being arrogant and egocentric. In their place the resurrection hope for Christians is located in procreation and influencing people (p. 212); the hope that one's life will be accepted by God as having fulfilled some part, at least, of the purpose for which it was created (p. 213)—whatever that might mean; and that the book of one's life despite death is

preserved, read and being read brings joy, satisfaction and inspiration (p. 212). How boringly egocentric can one get? That kind of hope may be fine for the comfortable, well-fed, middle-class European, but unfortunately

most of the people of the world aren't like that and their only hope is for a new heaven and a new earth:—something completely different!

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LE MYSTÈRE DU CULTE DANS L'HINDOUISE ET LE CHRISTIANISME, by R. Panikkar, trans. by B. Charrière. *Éditions du Cerf*, 1970. 208 pp. 45 F.

The original German edition of this book first appeared in 1964, and much has happened since then; nevertheless, this is still a highly topical and challenging book. Panikkar's contention is that it is only a rediscovery of authentic cult (liturgy) that can begin to solve the religious, or even the secular, problems of our age; and that the meeting between Christianity and Hinduism has an important contribution to make to this rediscovery.

The meeting between religions is bound to happen, the author maintains; the question is simply whether they will be able and willing actually to hear each other. If they try to meet simply as intellectual systems, they will be mutually deaf; it is in their living reality that they can become intelligible to each other—and this is because, in the last analysis, it is only in the *doing* that any religion makes sense even to itself.

And this is, at once, where the problem of the recovery of authentic cult comes in. Panikkar stresses, rightly and somewhat unexpectedly, how India actually stands for the primacy of *doing*; but not just activism or morality. Merely philanthropic, merely moral acts fail to be fully human. There is a liturgical, sacrificial, theandric dimension to the fully genuine human act, something that eludes, without contradicting, rational comprehension. Too much deliberateness, reflexive self-consciousness, actually prevents full involvement in what we are doing.

It is in liturgy, and, finally, only in liturgy that action and contemplation, reason and myth (imagination, instinct, and so on), human autonomy and divine providence find their integration and harmony. But liturgy must be *lived*, and this is one of the outstanding problems in the Church at present. Panikkar warns us that liturgy does not come alive simply through being rationalized and made intelligible to the mind; to be too aware of what one is about is a positive distraction. Yet how does one recover a sense of taking part in a cosmic, a divine, event which involves body, mind, subconscious, spirit, the lot? It seems pretty clear that most liturgical reform,

twentieth-century style, does not help in the slightest. Panikkar—in one of many extremely rewarding 'asides'—stresses the importance of sacred seasons, sacred places, sacred objects, all of which seem to be threatened by much modern liturgical reform (why, in God's name, is the Church's calendar after all these centuries being brought to heel in such an insensitive way?).

Panikkar certainly does not offer us any very practical helps, but his discussion of the development of Indian cult down the ages casts some extremely interesting light on the matter. Phase one he calls heteronomy, basically the condition of 'tribal' man, who is content simply to be a part of whatever is going on, and finds no difficulty at all in grasping that doing these particular ritual acts ensures that the world goes on, and even, in some sense, that God goes on. Phase two is the stage of 'autonomy', when man becomes conscious of himself, and accordingly suspicious of 'external rituals' (India seems to have had her 'twentieth century' a few millennia ago.); it is the inner authenticity that matters, external sacrifice is replaced by the sacrifice of the mind, in meditation, or the total self-oblation of bhakti (devotion). The third phase, to which Panikkar invites us, both Christians and Hindus, is what he calls 'ontonomy', that is to say, a condition in which we are wholly open to the Real, both the absolute reality of God, and the reality of ourselves, bodily and spiritual beings that we are. This involves, for us, a rediscovery of the mythical, without simply relapsing into tribal heteronomy (which is, incidentally, a real danger in the modern western world), a readiness to trust what we cannot grasp, a readiness to trust action, to do things without them being clearly planned and interpreted in advance. We must relearn what our forefathers knew, that cult is not something we simply make up for ourselves, not something we originate: it is a cosmic process, the divine sacrifice which initiates and sustains creation, and in which we are invited, by our self-sacrifice, to co-operate.

And this means a rediscovery of Tradition,