

facts and which proceeds by a 'methodological atheism' in the investigation of these facts. God and his communication are not to be found in the realm of empirical fact. We need a sensitivity to symbols if we are to hear what God is saying.

At an early stage, Fr. Shorter makes clear his belief that God gives the knowledge of himself not only in the Christian revelation but through all the great world religions, and even in ethnic and tribal religions. This seems to him a consequence of God's will that all should be saved. Perhaps he does not sufficiently allow for the fact that some religions have been cruel and corrupt, but all through the book there recurs the problem of the relation of the Christian revelation to the teaching of other faiths. Fr. Shorter shows a generous openness towards the non-Christian religions, while at the same time seeking to maintain the definitiveness of the revelation in Jesus Christ. Whether he comes to a consistent finding on this question is hard to say, but he does well to avoid both the exclusivism of those Christians who deny any truth to other religions and the thoroughgoing relativism of those who regard all religions as equally valid (or invalid).

The witness of the Old Testament is examined in detail. Our author has interesting things to say about the prophets and the intimacy of their relation to God. 'They felt that they were drawn into the emotions of God himself. They identified themselves with his designs in history, and they shared in the feeling of God's own heart, his wrath, his love, his sorrow, his revulsion and even his doubts. God's own sensibility flowed into the prophet's psyche'. These words might seem even to prepare for the mystery of the incarnation, so it is somewhat surprising to find the author saying later on that 'Jesus, unlike the Old Testament prophets, was not a mere "speaking tube" for God. He was

himself the epiphany of manifestation of God'. At this point, he might have paid attention to Schillebeeckx' use of the concept of prophet as applied to Jesus and to the potentialities that lie in it.

Revelation continues in the life of the Church, both as old truths are more deeply understood and as they disclose fresh understandings in new situations. Indeed, like Gregory of Nyssa, Fr. Shorter believes that the exploration of God is something to which there can be no end.

While the book is on the whole constructive and generous toward divergent opinions in what the author believes is a pluralistic theological period of history, there are some sharp and often perceptive criticisms of extreme positions. The secular theology of the sixties and the 'death of God' theology which still lingers on are ably criticized. 'Don Cupitt's faith', we are told, 'is the faith of a well-intentioned atheist'. Similarly, those recent theologies which have allied themselves with the ideology of some sectional group or other and express themselves in highly polemical terms are rebuked. 'A theology which needs an enemy for its own self-definition' has to that extent ceased to be Christian.

Some criticisms of the book must be made. Sometimes, words are used too loosely and imprecisely. An example is the use of the word 'myth' in relation to the Old Testament. Again, when it is said that 'we do not preach Christianity, but Christ', is this a real distinction, or one that would be convincing, say, to a Muslim? Sometimes, too, there is a hint of anti-intellectualism, as in the exaltation of myth, narrative and praxis over critical theology, without the recognition that these things can be very dangerous without critical analysis. But these are minor blemishes in a book which sets out to be concrete and an aid to faith rather than to academic theology.

JOHN MACQUARRIE

A NEW DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden. *SCM Press, 1983. Pp 614. £19.50*

Alan Richardson's *Dictionary of Christian Theology* appeared in 1969. He died in 1975. John Bowden, to whom English

theology already owes much, has supervised this thorough reworking and expansion. With forty-six entries to his

name, some lightly revised and most quite short, Richardson remains the most prolific contributor. Biographical entries have been left out this time: a companion volume, *Who's Who in Theology*, is in preparation. With 175 authors, embracing ten women, monks of Blackfriars, Oxford, as well as professors at Roman universities, bishops (the Anglican Kemp on Canon Law, the Catholic Konstant on Catechesis), at least two agnostics, an Associated Professor of Religion and the Personality Sciences at Berkeley, as well as distinguished occupants of more ancient chairs, the theology of the *Dictionary* might be expected to turn out rather a kaleidoscope or even a switchback. Obviously, in such an ecumenical enterprise, there is not the homogeneity of outlook to satisfy fans either of Fundamentalism (dealt with by a Catholic who teaches at Louvain) or of Ultramontaniam (one of the few regrettable lacunae). But if a theological dictionary is really a systematic theology spread out alphabetically rather than logically, this one proves remarkably coherent, comprehensive and integrated—which *doesn't* mean anodyne, compromised and boringly middle-of-the-road. On the contrary, the irony and imagination with which authors and topics have been matched often demonstrate how illuminating and astringent ecumenically written theology can be. And when authors have been assigned their King Charles's Head the predictable turns out to be lucidly and freshly conceived.

Bedtime reading of the distinctively 'Catholic' topics has yielded the following results. James Atkinson's vigorously polemical biography of Luther hardly prepares one for his eirenic entry on Precious Blood—although the proof-reader must have let him down: the fraternities in the Roman Church who are said to be dedicated to this cult concern themselves with the *relief*, rather than the *belief*, of souls in purgatory (whose propositional attitudes are presumably beyond their reach). The account of Indulgences, by a Lutheran (Timothy Lull), is splendidly clear and fair; "Both the treasury of merit and the notion of

intercession for the dead are rooted in a sense of solidarity as a church community—saints with sinners, the living with the dead". But that "there is a decreasing interest in indulgences" seems, even when backed with Karl Rahner's authority, a very premature judgment, away from the liberal-individualist middle-class parishes where little sense of solidarity is perceptible... Merit is entrusted to another Protestant (Gabriel Fackre), who works his way through to a reconciling statement—"The question remains, however, whether the word and concept merit, associated as they are with the earning of a reward, have the ability to convey a post-polemical consensus on the fecundity of Justifying faith". Relics are firmly defended by Symeon Lash: the cult of holy bones goes back to the second century, and the miraculous properties of bits of cloth are attested in Scripture—consider the handkerchiefs and aprons carried away from contact with Paul's (living) body, according to Acts 19. Certain tensions, not to say contradictions, sometimes surface. Lash's Conciliarity, by implication, rules out certain claims traditionally made for the papacy; but his orthodox circumspection is outdone by the plain Protestant speaking in the entry on Papacy (by R.P.C. Hanson and John Whale): "Most non-RC Christians today would find the historical claims of the papacy uncongenial...because many of them appear to betray a repulsive spirit of self-aggrandizement masquerading under religious pretexts, difficult to reconcile with a proper Christian humility". The entry on Infallibility, on the other hand, by Edward Yarnold (was no Lutheran to be found?), offers the conciliatory ARCIC line. Mariology and allied topics, as well as Feminist Theology, have all the characteristic smack of Rosemary Radford Ruether. J.C. O'Neill, in the entry on Simul justus et peccator, concludes that the slogan, if it has any value or meaning at all, was put about by Karl Holl after 1908 and has little if any importance in Luther's thought—which will no doubt interest B.A. Gerrish, who speaks of it as one of his famous watchwords (page 315).

Nearly every entry opens a trail to a dozen others. Some are crystallizations of rare and mature reflection: Rowan Williams on Imagery and Herbert McCabe on Thomism, to name two. Altogether, it is

a volume that shows how fascinating, concise, entertaining, passionate, and intellectually demanding Christian theology can be.

FERGUS KERR O.P.

IN MEMORY OF HER: A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. *SCM*. Limp £8.50. 1993. pp. xxv and 357.

Professor Schüssler Fiorenza rejects the view that feminist practice is rooted in the experience of contemporary women who reject their Christian past since she thinks that it is impossible for Western women to discard the Christian cultural heritage completely. While recognising the androcentric character of the tradition, that is, recognising that the tradition reflects the experience and control of male writers not the experience of women, she seeks to reconstruct early Christian history to restore both women to history and history to women

In Part I she outlines an appropriate method which both reflects the critical impulse of historical research and has liberation as its goal, so that the NT is seen not as archetype but as prototype, open to its own transformation. Androcentric language which uses masculine nouns and pronouns in a generic sense, she suggests, has lost its generic meaning, and become sexist to modern ears, and translators are encouraged to help the reader rediscover the fact that women are included in these generic statements. That women played a more significant role in the early church than is generally supposed in reading the NT is indicated by brief references to influential women which are not fully integrated into the presentation and by textual variants, e.g. in the Acts of the Apostles. The later identification of female leadership with heresy (e.g. Montanism) has affected the formation of the Canon, but once the process is recognised, something of the egalitarian beginnings of early Christianity can be glimpsed as a continuing undercurrent.

Part II is divided between the Jesus movement in Palestine and the early Christian movement in the Gentile world. Professor Schüssler Fiorenze pictures

Jesus' egalitarian attitudes in the context of the kind of respect for women in Judaism which is represented by the book of Judith. In this section, perhaps she underplays the importance of Jesus' crucifixion as an historical datum more in need of explanation than she supplies (p.135) but she returns to the theme later (e.g. p.317). She identifies impurity with sin, which is a misreading of Jewish religious sensibilities, but her main point is that Jesus' teaching about God is pervaded by a sophia tradition using female imagery. She discovers important roles played by Galilean women in the Jesus movement, in witnessing to the resurrection and in promoting the acceptance of Gentiles into the movement, and she discusses Jesus' indirect attacks on patriarchal structures in his teaching about marriage and in the creation of a community ethos free from family ties and authoritarian relationships.

The early Christian missionary movement in the Gentile world is shown to have been effectively served not only by wealthy female patrons, as in the Acts of the Apostles, but by female leaders and missionaries, who often worked as couples with men (Prisca and Aquila, Junia and Andronicus, Thecla and Paul). The wisdom theology of the new creation opened fresh social possibilities to women who shared equally with men in the life of the Spirit. Galatians 3:28 and its elaboration in 1 Corinthians 7 show this most clearly. 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 and 14:33b–36 advocate church order not female subordination. However, emphasis on the equality of men and women is modified by Paul's patriarchal imagery and by his negative attitude to the role of wives as distinct from celibate women.

Part III first traces male attempts to accommodate the church to external social