

Israelite religion and of the formation of the Old Testament, and once one has assimilated it almost nothing will look the same again. Inevitably the treatment moves, at times uneasily, between very detailed proposals about individual texts and very broad-brush hypotheses about the interpretation of whole books. The reader who is not yet convinced of the main thesis is likely to be uncomfortable with the conspiracy-theory which it requires. The existence of the old mythology, Barker argues, has been unsuspected until now because deuteronomistic and proto-rabbinic scribes have changed the texts to conceal it, with the result that it is mainly to be found in the places where the Hebrew text is most corrupt. Yet no-one doubts that there was a more luxuriant mythology in pre-exilic Israel than the Old Testament now contains, and Old Testament scholars frequently use the word 'demythologization' for the editorial activity that has quietly suppressed it. More difficult to prove, perhaps, is the association of the mythology with the Jerusalem Temple cult. Here Barker stands in the tradition of the 'Myth and Ritual' school which in its day represented a distinctive British contribution to Old Testament studies, and one which may well be due for a revival. But even if this connection cannot be demonstrated, enough remains to make us think very seriously before treating the weird thought-world of apocalyptic, with its heavenly journeys, magic, and cosmic battles, as an alien intrusion into Old Testament religion. Barker more than once hints that she believes the people who held to the old mythology were in touch with a reality to which both ancient and modern rationalism have become deaf and blind. Sympathy with such mythological beliefs may become an obsession, leading one to find them everywhere even against the evidence, and no doubt many will think that this has produced a book with more than its fair share of special pleading. But one person's special pleading is another's collection of straws in the wind. It is hardly conceivable that every individual argument here is correct: but the overall pattern that emerges is powerfully illuminating.

JOHN BARTON

THE RELIGION OF THE INCARNATION: ANGLICAN ESSAYS IN COMMEMORATION OF *LUX MUNDI* edited by Robert Morgan. *Bristol Classical Press, Bristol 1989. Pp. xx + 217. £19.95 cased, £7.95 paperback.*

Lux Mundi, which appeared in 1889, is a set of essays by Oxford theologians intended 'to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems'. At the time High Church theologians were upset by Charles Gore's adoption of what had recently come to be called 'higher criticism' in biblical studies. As the years went by, however, the book became something of a landmark in Anglican theology. It represented a 'liberal Catholicism' which eschewed doctrinal reductionism as well as Anglo-Papalist high camp. It is a pleasure to report that, whatever the internal difficulties of the Church of England which the media delight in sensationalizing, Anglican theologians associated with Oxford are still capable of mounting an intellectually interesting and essentially orthodox restatement of the Christian faith.

Robert Morgan, examining Scott Holland's essay in *Lux Mundi*, 302

reminds us (if we needed reminding) of what a remarkable theologian he was, concluding as follows (page 30): 'Support has been found in Scott Holland for starting theology with the tradition- and community-dependent life of faith itself, whether or not respectable foundations are available'. Andrew Louth, going from Thomas Aquinas to Pascal, suggests that no argument for the existence of God can now conclude with the words 'and this everyone calls God', simply because the notion of God has scarcely any sense outside an already religious context. David Brown, in the third essay, might be more sympathetic to traditional apologetics, at least judging by his indignation at D.Z. Phillips and Kenneth Surin as well as his detection of the influence of Lutheranism among his fellow contributors; but he finally rejects the patristic doctrine of the divine impassibility and settles for 'tragedy' in the nature of God as well as in the nature of creation (page 57). John Barton—no Lutheran he (page 63)!—nevertheless also, in his defence of the idea that the purposes of God are discoverable in nature and history and 'not merely in history as the Bible narrates it', finds support from 'a surprising (because essentially Lutheran) source' (page 70): namely, Gerd Theissen.

Maurice Wiles, while characteristically 'stressing the need for a less assured, less confident tone' (page 84), concludes rather guardedly that, with our evolutionary understanding of the world and deeper appreciation of other faiths, 'Christ, and the interpretation of his person in terms of Incarnation, may remain the symbols through which we relate our experience of faith to all the varied disclosures about the nature of our world to which the diverse forms of human learning give rise'. Rowan Williams, taking his stand on Barmen as well as Chalcedon, suggests that the doctrine of the Incarnation makes sense and avoids becoming ideology in the most malign sense only if it is firmly situated in the context of faith in divine *judgement*. No doctrine can be properly understood in isolation, as Trevor Williams notes: his essay reinterprets the problematic language and imagery of atonement and sacrifice in terms of liberation from alienation, concluding that 'our world today ... may not after all be so very different from what it was before', at least 'in terms of human conflict, frustration, fragmentation, guilt, and failure', so that the life and death of Jesus may be as profoundly significant as ever (page 118).

John Muddiman, returning to Gore's essay, insists that Anglicans must reopen the question of the inspiration of Scripture, in order to trace the limits of historical criticism and thus avoid having to choose between rationalism and neo-fundamentalism—to which 'even Catholic Anglicans' are vulnerable (page 129). Peter Hinchliff, having the task of discussing the Church, excoriates his predecessor's 'very simplistic and jejeune presentation of conventional, moderate Anglo-Catholic opinion' (Walter Lock, though not the strongest member of the *Lux Mundi* team, had the distinction of teaching in Oxford uninterruptedly from 1869 until his retirement at the age of eighty in 1927). In the end, after an interesting discussion of 'kenotic ecclesiology', Hinchliff focusses on how Christ's authority is actually exercised in the Church and seems somewhat depressed by his conclusion (page 155): 'The General Synod is, in practice, the final authority in the Church of England'.

Timothy Gorringer, who certainly quotes Luther with approval and

seems to be against the practice of infant baptism (page 159), offers a lively account of the sacraments *in genere*, insisting on mystery (though excluding 'fetishisation') as well as on politics (baptism, for instance, as 'a branding for radical openness', the eucharist administered 'to encourage revolutionary intent')—neither reductionism nor mere ritualism here! David Nicholls, in the funniest as well as the most moving chapter in the whole book, deals explicitly with Christianity and politics: the *Lux Mundi* contribution ('the State is sacred') is totally rejected. Alister McGrath agrees that the task of Christian ethics is to challenge secular attitudes, even and especially when they have been absorbed by Christians.

In the closing chapter Geoffrey Rowell tells us about the *Lux Mundi* group and the impact which the book had a hundred years ago. In the preface Robert Morgan shows that Oxford theology is no longer, as it was then, a wholly Anglican affair. It may be noted that there are no women or lay men among the thirteen authors.

Of course the writers differ here and there, but a distinctive and coherent set of positions emerges, respectful of Catholic tradition as well as exploratory and critical. All of these men have been formed by the liturgy and theology of the Church of England, and all have teaching and pastoral responsibilities. An institution which can give birth to such an interesting collection of essays, whether it be the Oxford Theology Faculty or the Church of England, cannot be in such dire straits as its critics generally suppose!

FERGUS KERR OP

EASTER IN ORDINARY: REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, by Nicholas Lash. S.C.M. 1988, Pp. 311. £12.95.

'There *is*, I think, an argument in this book, but it is not the kind of argument of which it would be profitable, at this point, to attempt a summary: to do so might make it seem to be a more purely *theoretical* argument than I intend it to be'. So Professor Lash in his final chapter (p. 287). What then is the reviewer to do? Should he attempt such a summary? He is hardly likely to avoid the distortion the author is afraid of perpetrating on himself. Should he treat the book as an attempt to coax the 'reader not so much to accept the conclusions of an argument ... but rather to come to *see* things in a particular way' (which he might not unreasonably be inclined to do), he will soon realise that that approach will be no more acceptable to Lash, who himself objects to William James' pursuit of such a procedure (p. 23). Perhaps he can simply ignore the author's intention, since Lash explicitly avows the fashionable view that it is the text rather than the text's producer with whom the reader is primarily concerned (p. 6).

The subtitle gives an accurate account of the concern of the book. Lash pursues his quest primarily by way of dialogue with several major figures of the last two centuries. The most substantial discussion is of William James, who (despite Lash's sympathy with certain aspects of his undertaking) is treated as the fall guy. His radical individualism and his anthropological dualism represent two cardinal errors, which inevitably vitiate his understanding of the central issue. Schleiermacher, Newman, von