

question is called for.

This having been said, Wedderburn and Lincoln have provided introductions to Colossians and Ephesians which are both accessible and immensely stimulating. Not least, they offer a challenge to students of the New Testament to engage afresh in the difficult but necessary theological task.

IAN BOXALL

KNOWING JESUS, by James Allison, OP. S.P.C.K. 1993. pp.vii-116, £7.99.

After a foreword by Rowan Williams, and a brief introduction the book has a simple structure of four chapters. *The Resurrection*, *The Intelligence of the Victim*, *A Framework for Knowing*, *Suggestions for Further Reading* and an index. Treatment of a more perceptive and vital understanding of the significance of the resurrection of Christ leads on to a discussion of how the apostles eventually came to share Jesus' self-understanding of his role as a conscious and willing victim. Consideration of the universal relevance of this "victim intelligence" then opens up reflection on how this produces a totally new way of knowing Christ.

The simplicity and incredibly fresh and vivid style result both from the fact that the material was originally given as lectures by a superb teacher, and from the immediacy of the writer's experience of the victim point of view in various parts of the third world.

His thesis is that the resurrection transformed the apostles' understanding of Jesus' life and teaching not by a sort of *post factum* vindication, but by making present for ever the crucified-and-risen victim Son of God—a significance only gradually comprehended in the light of Pentecost and their own subsequent reflection, but which is now fully inscribed in all the New Testament records (not just the Gospels) of Jesus' life and teaching as well as his passion and death. This significance Alison calls the "victim intelligence" (we might more naturally say the victim's understanding or perception of the real situation) whereby willing participation in the one supreme sacrifice according to God's will not only expresses love and obedience, but provides the interpretative key to the whole of Jesus' work. This transforms (Alison's favourite word is *looses*) all modes of relationship thereafter—with God, and among human beings.

The point is that willing victimhood forever challenges all relationships which are exclusive, in which people define themselves over against something or someone else. And the reason is that the resurrection reveals with blinding clarity the pure gratuitousness of being, of life, and of all other gifts that follow. So, since all is given by God, there is no need, and no ground for clinging, for defending personal securities or for appropriating areas of existence for self-identity. Alison's further contention is that this form of knowledge of God is not the result of intimate and personal spiritual experience (though these may occur as gratuitous extras) but is made available to all, in the Church and in the sacraments. The most obvious demonstration of how such willing

victimhood is the key to the whole of Christ's work is seen in the last Supper, where he was clearly providing beforehand the interpretation of his passion; consequently the key example of the whole thesis is found at heart of the Church's life—in the Eucharist.

If our sacramental and ecclesial lives do not exhibit an increasing degree of integration with all that God has made and that Christ has redeemed, and a corresponding decrease in selfishness, defensiveness, and all forms of manipulative or exploitative behaviour, we cannot truly say that we *know* Jesus. The thesis is convincing and the book compelling reading for the most part, though details of the line of argument are sometimes obscure (for instance in the treatment of justification by grace through faith) and the repetition occasionally irritating. It certainly succeeds in giving this reader a bad conscience, but in a cheerful and encouraging way. One is left with a certain sense of wistfulness: "If only it could really be like that. . ." James Alison can engender the hope that it could be, and he is realistic enough to identify success with the *parousia*.

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NATURAL LAW THEORY: CONTEMPORARY ESSAYS edited by Robert P. George. OUP. 1992. Pp. 371. £40.

Time was when natural law was about as fashionable in secular law schools as canon law, and in secular philosophy departments as astrology. Not so today. Natural law theory has made a comeback, and if it does not yet dance triumphantly on the graves of positivism, utilitarianism, contractualism, and other handmaids of liberalism, the latter are certainly showing signs of terminal illness while, as George's book demonstrates, the former is robust and challenging.

These essays vary in their accessibility but do not in general presume that the reader is *au fait* with current jurisprudence; instead they invite us to enter into some of the central questions which are exciting writers at the moment, such as the self-evidence (or not) of moral norms, the pluriformity (or not) of human goods, the existence (or not) of human rights, as well as the complex relationships between law, morality, human nature and virtue.

The collection reflects something of the diversity of contemporary natural law theories, and their openness to dialogue with competing views past and present. The new generation of natural lawyers are not simply neo-Thomists, dressed in the more fashionable garb of 'human rights' and 'virtue-ethics' but replaying the old crusade against the Enlightenment. Boyle for instance engages with the 'communitarian' MacIntyre, and George with the neo-Thomist McInerney; Hittinger treats the new natural law theories of Gewirth and Pincoffs; Finnis examines the works of Nozick and Dworkin; Stout draws on as diverse a collection of writers as van Fraassen, Bernard Williams, Baier and Edmund Burke for his analysis.

Not only does the present volume demonstrate the creative tensions between new natural law theory, its precursors and its opponents, but a