

(p.131), 'though it seems to be in the indicative mood, is an expression of faith,' But how do indicatives differ from expressions of faith and what, in any case, are indicatives? Questions like this are prompted by Phillips' argument all along the line and since he gives no answers to them the answers he does give are hardly even assessable. They are answers to problems which are themselves unclear to begin with.

Throughout his book Phillips acknowledges a considerable debt to Wittgenstein. He could have chosen a worse mentor. According to Wittgenstein, however, philosophy is a difficult and demanding occupation. To his way of thinking the great danger lies in a lack of puzzlement. If I were asked to sum up my feelings about *Religion Without Explanation*, I would

A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH TO THE EVE OF THE REFORMATION, by Philip Hughes. Sheed & Ward. 1976. xx + 1319 pp. £11.50

I cannot see why this expensive paperback was published at all. The original three volumes of which it is composed were written between the early thirties and the end of the war: they are utterly out of date. The last thirty years has seen an immense flowering of scholarship on the topics Father Hughes dealt with. In his day one man could, just about, master the relevant secondary literature provided he set aside the primary texts. I should judge it to be impossible to do this now. The period is covered by the first two volumes of the Christian Century series—which when I bought them cost about the same as this book does in hardback—written by Danielou, Marrou, Knowles and Obolensky. I am afraid Father Hughes cannot compete in that league. (In many ways the more solid German series, of which there is an English edition edited by Jedin and Dillon, *Handbook of Church History*, is better still: it isn't so readable and not all of it is very church-centred but it is very good.) The trouble with Father Hughes's book is that it suffers from the kind of anaemia due to undernourishment from the original sources and it comes close in places to being a summary—not always a very good summary—of the notorious *Fliche et Martin*. Father Hughes could not free himself from the then prevailing triumphalism and probably wouldn't have found a publisher if he had.

say that its author is not puzzled enough. The book is provocative and entertaining, but it moves too fast and assumes too much. It persistently refuses to see problems where problems undoubtedly exist and, where matters needing explanation are concerned, it fails to see the need to explain. At the head of his text Phillips reproduces a remark related by M. O'C. Drury. 'Do you think there *must* be a significance, an explanation? As I see it there are two sorts of people: one man sees a bird sitting on a telegraph wire and says to himself "Why is that bird sitting just there?" the other man replies "Damn it all, the bird has to sit somewhere." That might sound clever, but a bird looking for a quiet sleep may know better.

BRIAN A. DAVIES

In the first section what mattered to the author was to show how the papacy controlled and guided all the developments in early theology. Most of the early heresies are baldly and very curiously summarised because what matters is to show that the pope of the day was nice, wise and right. The glimmerings of a more candid approach can be seen (and did not in his day endear him to authority). Father Hughes makes no bones about the lack of participation by the Roman See in the Council of Nicea. Under the then pope, Sylvester I, he said the papacy seemed to pass through a quarter of a century's retirement. On the other hand, in a curious version of the *Quo Vadis* legend, Our Lord, mindful of pontifical dignity, tactfully invited Peter to return to Rome. Moving on, the account of the so-called Gregorian reformation, based on a not very well understood version of the late M. Fliche's very inadequate interpretation (a former student of mine once called Fliche's Gregory the Pope *en pantouffles*) is hopelessly inadequate. We are told Gregory VII was not intransigent but the very soul of reasonableness. This of the man whose favourite biblical quotations were "cursed be the sword that abstains from blood" and "disobedience is worse than witchcraft". We are told that the papal election decree of 1059 still prevails. Since it reserves the sole power to nominate the pope to half-

a-dozen cardinal bishops and makes no mention of any election procedure of any kind as we would understand the word, it is apparent Father Hughes had never read it. At the end of the middle ages we are told Hus's heresy was manifest: not any more it isn't. Father Hughes seems to find his martyrdom commonplace and is puzzled about why the Czechs made such a fuss. But he is properly forthright about the death of Savonarola and the pope's part in what he rightly calls a monstrous perversion of justice. But the pope was Alexander VI and even triumphalists could be rude about him.

Scholarship had something to do with the revolution inadvertently set off by John XXIII and Vatican II, and it has in the years since the Council thrown off the

JUST MEN by Gordon Rupp. *Epworth Press*, London 1977. 181 pp.

£2.75

The Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge strikes one as the very best kind of ecumenist. The passionate particularity with which he belongs to his own (Classical Reformed and Methodist) line of spiritual ancestry is precisely what sharpens and gives interpretative power to his wide-ranging sympathies of the heart for a host of christian men in a variety of traditions. The combination of the particular and the universal is presented quite devastatingly in the frontispiece to his *Festschrift Christian Spirituality* which shows him as President of the Methodist Conference dressed in the frock-coat of a nineteenth century Anglican archdeacon and standing before an altar positively dripping with Baroque monstrances. Truly, all things to all men!

The essays Professor Rupp has gathered together in this volume purport to be a series of 'set-piece orations' on figures in the history of Christendom: one Late Antique Christian, one Mediaeval, five studies of Reformation heroes (including half an essay on an anti-hero, More), one Augustan and three Victorians. Looking slightly closer, the diversity of scope they offer and the diversity of method he has used seem more striking than any unified attempt to revive a traditional 'art-form' as the publisher puts it. Contrast, for instance, the piece on Luther with the opening essay on Benedict of Nursia. Rupp's dozen pages on Luther are academically the finest thing in the book, and offer a

kind of inhibitions and restrictions by which Philip Hughes was bound. Without a massive apostasy from decent critical standards and scholarly honesty, the study of Church History can never go back to pre-conciliar compromises. This is why it has a value over and above the particular interest of a particular study by a particular historian. It is a safeguard against the kind of Church Mgr. Lefebvre would like to lock us up in, and, perhaps more importantly, the rather different kind of Church the disciples of Dr. Kung would prefer. But the passage of time and the tide of scholarship have killed this book stone dead.

ERIC JOHN

nutshell appraisal of the current state of Luther studies, contextualised as these now are in a far closer analysis of late mediaeval catholicism and of Reformation radicalism than the old apologetic histories could muster. (It reminds the reader who has followed Rupp's work that he emerged almost overnight as a major interpreter of the Reformation by his little book *Martin Luther, Hitler's Cause—or Cure?* produced from the decent suburban obscurity of a Chislehurst manse to counter a war-time propagandist who had traced to Luther the trauma of the German soul.) The essay on Benedict, on the other hand, looks like one of those dreadful cloying sweetmeats the English offer each other as formal courtesies on ecumenical occasions: a panegyric along the lines of 'Benedict the Patron of Europe' with the obligatory comparisons of the Benedict of Gregory's *vita* to a Harrovian prefect on the run from school with (improbably) his Nannie, and so forth. But to penetrate rather deeper to the structures of comparison which underlie Rupp's various manners and tones of voice, there is a real, and highly instructive, unity in what he has to say.

What Rupp has tried to do in these vignettes is to give us a sense of christian revelation through the prism of the lives of a group of christian heroes, and to let us see its coherence at the level of the experience of grace, even when the dogmatic expression of that experience (which he rightly regards as vital for the christian life of the