

TO AND FRO ON THE EARTH, Maisie Ward. *Sheed and Ward*. 176 pp. £2.75.

Memory has a curious habit of ignoring the recent past and delighting in the earlier period of its existence. This may account for the enthusiasm for the early Church among current liberated liturgists; and it certainly explains why many elderly people retain vivid, even if inaccurate, memories of their youth while their late years are dimmed by a thickening mist. So Maisie Ward rightly subtitled her recent work 'A Sequel to an Autobiography'. Her autobiography 'Unfinished Business' took her to 1964 when she was already 75, so it is little wonder that in the almost incredible journeyings from that date until 1972—New York, the Snowy Mountains in Australia, Madras, not to mention short stops in the Philippines, Japan and Hong Kong—the reader is left with no impression of how this indomitable old lady handled such extensive travel. Nor is it very clear what she did in these distant places. But the mists of the recent past hide only factual history in order to leave memory greater power to recall the great crusading ideas which should inspire posterity to progress to modes of life far more lasting than that of a long-distance traveller. This 'Sequel' might well be the triumph of peace through non-violence. For this is the seed Maisie Ward sows throughout the book. With the heroic people of the *Catholic Worker* movement in New York, Washington and elsewhere she comes to the conclusion that 'there *must* be a revolution, but that revolution must be non-violent—at least on the side of the revolutionaries' (p. 23). And this revolution must begin from the roots of poverty—'One cannot live in places that eat up an entire income of which some part belongs of right to the dispossessed'. In Australia she finds an application of these principles not only in the outback 'homesteads' but also in the

groups of the *Recovery* movement working in the cities helping the ill-adjusted to help themselves back to happy living—another form of poverty prevalent in urban society. A gleam of hope for the untouchables and city poor in India is to be found in the co-operative movement and the student camps—a small 'revolution' when one considers the vast needs of that continent, but all her interests lie with the small movements that suggest the ethos of the very early Church. And the reader is reminded that 'amid the horrors of our civilisation today it is important to stress that when Christ said 'Blessed are the poor,' he was not saying it is blessed to be desperate, dehumanised, brutalised. One startles and shocks old-time conservatives by telling them that the Church's moral law states specifically that a starving man has the *right* to take food—it is *not* stealing. He has the same right to food that he has to air and light' (p. 89).

There is a moving chapter about the effects of prison life on those Americans who have chosen gaol for the sake of peace. It is sad that the final chapter of this 'Sequel' should dwell on the mad fringe of Satan worshippers, drug addicts and murderers, but it adds a sharp point to the claim for peace through non-violence and poverty. But Maisie Ward concludes the first chapter of the book on the theme of hope. 'If these last years of my life have a theme running through them it would be that of hope dawning despite of, through, the well-warranted near-helplessness . . . Creation is at work everywhere—on a large scale occasionally, but more significantly in small-scale achievements by the score, the hundreds, the thousands. All over the world I have found small groups who are building a new world in the shell of the old'.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

INCARNATION AND IMMANENCE, by Helen Oppenheimer. *Hodder & Stoughton*, 1973. 242 pp. £2.75.

In *The Character of Christian Morality* Lady Oppenheimer suggested that 'Christian morality begins with a fact which engages one's personality completely', and promised to address herself to 'this transcendent fact'. In that earlier work there was something incomplete in her exploration. This time she has set out from *person* rather than *personality*, and the result is impressive mapping of the area.

I like F. D. Maurice and H. L. Mansel, Lady Oppenheimer is concerned with the reconciliation of talk of God as personal with talk of the divine as immaterial. And, like Maurice

rather than like Mansel, she has composed a very personal piece of work, one which properly comes close to autobiography—'Of course we experience God's grace in our lives, if we claim to be Christian at all—and whose style is that of an easy and sophisticated conversation. Forster might have supplied herself with an epigraph: 'It is private life that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision', but I am not so sure that Lady Oppenheimer would have so readily distinguished 'private life' from 'public

life' in which 'telegrams and anger count' and 'personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there'. Lady Oppenheimer brings the private and public together in her theological enterprise.

Taking us out of tiresome talk of 'I-Thou', Lady Oppenheimer delicately articulates love as a way of immanence in more than one situation. We discover ourselves through our mattering in a complexity of inter-relationships. 'I participate, therefore I am'. And so I can find myself taking others seriously, admitting that they matter to themselves and others. Each member of this unity-in-plurality is 'a kind of living point of view' within the community. And God in these terms is the 'being for whom all points of view are assembled'. He has a life of his own' which is also characterised by unity-in-plurality) and is thus able to take part in personal relationships with us.

But if we think 'in fully personal terms' of the divine and 'make use of all the insights which a personal rather than a legal morality promises to yield', how are we to be sure that we are fully responsible persons within the relationship? Perhaps the graceful decision, says Lady Oppenheimer in a favourite simile, is arrived at in the way of complementarity which characterises joint decisions of husband and wife. Far from suffering the loss of freedom, each is, she suggests, more freely personal than before. So it may be that we

should expect the relationship of grace and the attendant decisions, since all is begun by one who is infinite, to be a process within which we find infinite freedom ourselves.

In such a public world as Forster describes some Christians have made efforts to establish the personal values in ways which Lady Oppenheimer cannot approve. 'The currently fashionable way of characterising the significance of Christ does not say much about God's grace. It calls Jesus of Nazareth the 'man for others' in that through his whole life, teaching and death he stood for the unique and ultimate value of self-giving love'. This is not enough. Lady Oppenheimer follows Dr David Jenkins in wanting to speak of Christ as the location of grace. But how is such a locating of grace possible? How is the creative to be set in harmony with the redeeming presence of the divine?

Lady Oppenheimer makes a deal of the old doctrine of 'pre-existence' towards the end of her book. But she rather rushes things here. We believe in 'the Word made flesh' not, as she says, 'in Christ's pre-existent divinity', despite the oddity of Jude among New Testament witnesses. We may hope that Lady Oppenheimer will not content herself with what she has managed here. She should suffer gracefully the charge that one who has written so well on Immanence has not said enough on Incarnation.

HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, by Jeremiah Newman. *Talbot Press*, Dublin, 1972. 242 pp. No price given.

Maybe there's a Maynooth school of clerical sociology. Reading this book—lectures given at Maynooth and elsewhere by the President of Maynooth—is like having your moral tutor along. Not overbearing particularly, but firmly keeping you on the right track. Thus he says Durkheim allows no place for human rights and the human soul; there is a danger in many fields of Marxist innuendo; divorce laws are increasingly invoked by the selfish and lax; and so on.

He has a real problem of course. While obviously sociology does not concern itself with the truth or otherwise of the supernatural, by looking at things in a relative sort of way (i.e. precisely as social phenomena) sociology does tend to reduce the special claims of all world views to equality. This applies not just to Christianity, but to any world view, whether religious, Marxist, or that of Western rationality. It is this threat of relativism which seems to lie behind Dr Newman's book. It's a real threat and there are real arguments going on (not least within sociology) about relativity and

reductionism, about whether Durkheim (or Marx for that matter) adequately accounts for the way people experience things. But the way to discuss these matters is not to use sociology as a kind of background for expounding your privileged moral philosophy. Or at least the exposition should not be presented as an introduction to sociology.

Part of the trouble is the amount of ground covered by Dr Newman. Under neatly subdivided headings, the 24 pages of the opening chapter on the origin and development of sociology whip the reader through 65 characters (and this excludes those mentioned in the footnotes). Naturally there is hardly getting to the bottom of any of them. So one turns to the chapter on political sociology hoping that some of them will turn up again, or that there will be a discussion of how power is exercised or perceived or attributed, or maybe something about conflict or opposing interests. Instead what one finds is basically a collection of definitions of such things as forms of government with examples and the kindly advice