

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

Hügel, Buber and Rahner are then reviewed in a critical but much more positive manner. The last two in particular are quarried in ways that point in the direction of the position that Lash himself is seeking to establish. The historical survey is full of interesting insights. So too is Lash's development of his own views, though the demands on the reader increase as the book progresses. It is a deeply learned and religiously sensitive book.

Lash rightly insists on the mystery of God as fundamental. God is not to be regarded as an object in the world, nor therefore as the explanatory cause of particular differences in the world. Experience of God must therefore be a characteristic of human experiencing as a whole, and not something belonging only to a particular segment of experience to be categorised as 'religious experience'. All that is well said. But it is not so clear to me that Lash extricates himself fully from the difficulties such insinuations pose for the would-be theologian. Deism is not the answer, for that still allows that God makes a difference in terms of the world's initial conditions (p. 225). Theism, too, is to be dispensed with (pp. 104, 172). In their place we are offered a Trinitarian doctrine of God, understood as sustaining a dialectic between pantheism and agnosticism.

The difficulty in assessing this proposal is that it is not easy to be sure just what is being said or how it is based. That is not altogether surprising for someone who, like Lash, properly insists that knowledge of God is not purely a matter of the intellect, but involves trust and sanctity as well. But he is perhaps a little too ready to claim the credit for any bewilderment of his readers (p. 220). It is important to give equal weight to *both* halves of the adage: 'Seek clarity and distrust it'. Christian doctrine is understood as 'identity-sustaining rules of discourse and behaviour'. The distinction between Logos and Spirit corresponds to that between the two domains of discourse and behaviour. Lonergan and Lindbeck are cited as illustrating the traditional and comprehensive character of such an approach. Criticisms of their work are acknowledged but not allowed to impede the appropriation of their views. Lash (like Lindbeck) does not want to disavow all cognitive significance to his doctrine, but it is not made sufficiently clear how that claim to cognitive status is consistent with the position that he has developed earlier in the book. Moreover his insistence on a Trinitarian doctrine as crucial to the view of God in relation to the world which he wants to maintain sits oddly with the fact that the closest approximation to it in those he draws upon is to be found in Buber, the Jew. Whatever the truth of his position, I don't believe it is as traditional as he hopes to persuade us that it is.

But my primary criticism relates to method rather than content. The book does constitute a form of argument, one of a highly rhetorical and persuasive kind. But too often, it seems to me, there is a double standard about the way in which his own reasoning and the reasoning of others are assessed. Lash's engaging frankness about this must not allow it to pass unchallenged. Twice he openly admits that he is offering a caricature of his opponent's position as a way of bringing out its significant features (pp. 80; 99). Such a procedure may have a place in a 'conversation' where the opponent can answer back, but has no place in published work, however much it may be described as a form of 'conversation'. I give one other example. The quest for ultimate explanation of the world in God is seen as a

Promethean attempt to control how things make sense, born of 'terror or self-importance (the twin faces of egotism)' (p. 225). Yet in his own account God's presence in the world as 'spirit' is 'why we exist at all' (p. 276), and 'it is our awareness of incomprehensible mystery which constitutes the permanent possibility of our (indefinitely extendable) comprehension of contingent particulars' (p. 236). Is that so different from the quest for explanation that the latter can be dismissed in such pejorative terms? I am in basic sympathy with much (though not all) of that for which Lash is arguing. But for this reader at least (and, as Lash himself says, 'for whom else can I speak?' (p. 23)), there are aspects of the style of argumentation that are distinctly counter-productive.

MAURICE WILES

ICONOGRAFIA DI SANTA CATERINA DA SIENA, I : L'IMMAGINE by Lidia Bianchi & Diega Giunta. *Città Nuova*, Rome, 1988. pp. 606. 140000 lire.

'A picture does not always *live* for me while I am seeing it', is one of those Wittgensteinian remarks that linger and tease the mind towards understanding.

The remark may prove illuminating when delving into this monumental survey of some 1200 works of art showing St Catherine of Siena, dating from the 14th century to virtually the present day. Most of the items are listed individually, many with corresponding illustrations, and there is an ample bibliography. So abundant was the material collected, from Peru to Sweden, that two further volumes are planned, this one focussed on images of the *person* of Catherine, rather than, say, episodes from her life. Over 600 works of art are explained individually at some length by a team of named writers, rigorously concentrating on dating, style, attribution and so forth. The opening essay by Bianchi is a much-needed, detailed study of the saint's tomb in Rome.

Even simply as an extensive catalogue, the book would be indispensable; in addition it has a valuable historical and theological interpretation of the material by Giunta (pp. 63–151). Manuscript and printed material apart, not many works seem to survive from before Catherine's canonization in 1461, although there is still in Siena the delicately devotional fresco by Vanni, who knew the saint personally. It would appear that the early artistic representations of events in the life of Catherine followed reliable sources closely, and that the signs and symbols express the inner realities and states, the mystical phenomena and spiritual ascesis, the choices and renunciations, actually to be found in this extraordinary woman, who became a lay Dominican.

The 16th-century painting now at Blackfriars, Oxford—portraying stigmata, heart, halo, devil, triple crown, crucifix, Latin verse by Pius II—indicates how much unpacking some art requires. This proliferation corresponds to the imaginative fertility of Catherine's own thought. (Incidentally, where was this painting for centuries and where is its lower section now?). Giunta provides background and information, whether to explain why the saint is holding a red and a white rose, or to outline the long disputes between Dominicans and Franciscans over Christ's own blood and