

**DOMINATION OR LIBERATION: THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN SOCIAL CONFLICT,**  
by Alistair Kee, *SCM Press, 1986, pp xiii + 126.*

This short book, the expanded version of a lecture course, covers principle areas of recent political theology: Feminist, Black, Liberation and New Right theologies. Alistair Kee thinks that the era of liberation in theology, as in Western Society at large, may now have come to an end, so in some respects these chapters read like postmortem reports. The theologies of liberation—with the probable exception of the Latin American—do not have the critical weapons with which to cope with the entrenched patterns of dominance over women, black and poor people, which the religions of the New Right are busy reaffirming. He thinks that feminist theologians, although they have done much excellent scholarly work on the historical oppression of women in Christianity, have weakened their case on three counts: by making ordination a central issue, they reinforced the clerical ethos which oppressed them in the first place; by looking to the New Testament evidence (always ambivalent), instead of to present injustices, in order to legitimate their claims; and by supposing that male domination will die of shame once it is exposed, instead of subjecting it to hard critical analysis. Despite his criticism, a few bad jokes and the occasional use of 'man' when he means human being, Kee gives a fair and approving account of feminist scholars such as Ruether and Fiorenza. Black theology comes off worst. Kee thinks it is largely a product of the relatively privileged black culture of North America and that it reproduces some of the worst features of white Western Christianity. The black religious leaders he most admires—Martin Luther King and Alan Boesak—are not doing 'black theology' at all, but analysing the structures of injustice from a black perspective and in a practical way. Only Latin American Liberation Theology survives Kee's critical tests: largely because it has been willing to take on board Marxist critical tools. It has been able to demonstrate in both secular and church society that domination is not simply caused by evil men, but usually by worthy and sincere servants of bad structures serving class interests. The final chapter deals with the rise of New Right Christianity in Brazil, North America and Britain. It is shown to be a counterfeit gospel, owing less to the Bible than to the espousal of certain rightwing causes and ideologies, including that of the free market and 'civil religion'. His analysis in this chapter is informative and illuminating. It presents a chilling picture of a coming dark age for the cause of liberation. Although there are plenty of good Evangelicals and Catholics around, they need to mobilise in the cause of the gospel as efficiently as the right wing does in its own pseudo-Christian causes. This book is well worth reading. It is marked by Kee's usual tough critical approach, unafraid to point out a dead end in radical theology when he sees one, but maintaining his commitment to the women and men who work for the gospel of liberation.

ROGER RUSTON OP

**THE NEW EVE IN CHRIST** by Mary Hayter. *SPCK, London, 1987, £6.95.*

The last five years have seen a synthesis of the research on women and the church carried out over the preceding twenty-five years. One of the most useful of such recent studies is Mary Hayter's *The New Eve in Christ*. While it could not have been produced without the scholarship and intellectual climate provided by such as Ruether, Daly, Schillebeeckx and Fiorenza, all of whom are acknowledged in the comprehensive bibliography, Hayter's book is far more than the sum of its parts. Her study of the use of the bible in the debate about women's ministry recognizes and addresses all the different viewpoints expressed along the spectrum of christian and feminist polemic, while making its own very original contribution to scriptural scholarship relevant to theology far beyond the question of ministry.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first, 'Sexuality in God and the Nature

of Priesthood,' is mainly concerned with the old testament; the second, 'Women's Status and Function in Ministry,' chiefly revolves around the new. Hayter uses what she calls 'culture-critical' methodology to examine the biblical texts, not with a view to dismissing culturally-determined passages but in order to understand and interpret their meaning fully. The old testament section is particularly strong in its breadth of treatment, originality and clarity of expression; her explanation of the interrelation of social and religious concerns, and the parallels she draws between understanding of God and the conception of priesthood, are especially useful. The second section on christianity, is more derivative but treats particular difficult passages very fully, with proper regard for recent opinions.

Hayter is sometimes guilty of over-simplifying alternative viewpoints, particularly when she is trying to summarize the thoughts of a group as opposed to an individual. Her presentation of the views of non-Christian feminists, for instance, is frequently stereotypical, so that she argues against positions which do not exist as she delineates them. Nevertheless, this book is a fine synthesis of the study of women and ministry, and an original contribution to biblical scholarship in general. For anyone wishing to read or recommend an introduction to the tenets of christian feminism *The New Eve in Christ* would be an excellent choice.

KATE MERTES

**THE CONCEPT OF REALITY** by Edo Pivcevic. *Duckworth 1986 ix + 296 pp. £19.95 hb.*

A discussion of the concept of reality is a discussion not of one but of a whole cluster of concepts, all of them centrally important to philosophy. Among the chief of them are existence, individuation, pluralism, experience, time, objectivity, realism and truth. In this clearly written and absorbing book Pivcevic deals with them all. He has a sharply defined aim in view; it is to show that because, as he argues, the treatment accorded to existence claims in recent analytic philosophy will not bear scrutiny, and because its collapse involves the fall of allied views about truth and reality, it is therefore necessary to reexamine the basis of the concepts by means of which our thought about objects, reality and truth proceed. The bulk of the book is devoted to this task. In it Pivcevic advances a conception of reality as a function of structural interdependence between the concepts we employ in our epistemic activities. In one good sense of the label Pivcevic is therefore an anti-realist, and his book is a new contribution to the perspectives from which anti-realism, as a thesis capable of positive articulation, can be understood.

The book is divided into two parts of unequal length. In Part One Pivcevic investigates three connected themes, each of great importance. The first concerns the concept of an 'ontological existent', which Pivcevic examines in relation to the categories of identity, individuality and plurality. This exploration leads Pivcevic to the conclusion that our possession of criteria of identity for existents can only be explained if we look at the nature of the experience which takes them as its 'targets'. This constitutes the second theme. Pivcevic conducts us through a phenomenological analysis of the modalities of experience, showing how such an analysis clarifies the matter of *reference* and, further, that it is a necessary condition for reference that experience should involve a unity of biographical time. Discussion of problems about the individuation of existents leads, by a series of logical dependencies, through the issues of pluralism, relations and the conception of a 'subjective-objective' distinction. This introduces the question of *error*. Put thus summarily, the relevance of error may not appear obvious; but in Pivcevic's view a 'subjective-objective' distinction presupposes a plurality of logically independent selves, and this demands that in order to conceive the possibility of experience which I will never have, it is required that I should in principle be capable of mistaking facts about the biography of another. But this, in turn, in requiring that there should be means for identifying and correcting error, connects with the conceptions of objectivity and truth; and these form the third of the three themes Pivcevic discusses.

367