

A reader alert to Derrida's linking of the idealist metaphysics of 'presence' to the foregrounding of 'voice' and to Lacan's further linking of ego-centricity to phallogocentrism will not be surprised to find Heaney constantly drawing upon a *sexual* vocabulary and upon dubious distinctions of *gender* in his critical comments, his characteristic analyses. A telling example from page 88:

So I am setting up two modes and calling them masculine and feminine – but without the Victorian sexist overtones ... In the masculine mode, the language functions as a form of address, of assertion or command ... whereas words in the feminine mode behave with the lover's come-hither instead of the athlete's display ...

This is so pervasive a feature of the book (cf. pp 20, 34, 57, 80, 83, 94 etc.) and so informs Heaney's response to individual poems (e.g. pp 42, 53, 78) that it indicates the most basic 'preoccupation' of all, yet the theme of sex is rarely confronted directly, in all its Irish, Catholic,

resonances: only in the discussion of Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* (pp 124-6) are those dimensions explicit.

The back cover proclaims 'Everyone knows by now that Heaney is a major poet'. Yet the thought nags that until Heaney can somehow more absolutely grapple with the *troubling* dimensions of voice, sex, place – with precisely those more intractable relations between, say, Catholic metaphysics and Irish sexual repression – he will not have sounded his full and proper 'voice'. Only the poems can do that, but in re-reading the *Selected Poems* and *Field Work* one senses again that between the political and the metaphysical (between Brecht and Stevens, say) there is often (though not always) only a thin terrain, that of the exact mundane or the merely autobiographical epiphany, the domestic moment or the elegy for friends. For a major poet it does not seem, quite, enough.

BERNARD SHARRATT

CHRIST: THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE MODERN WORLD by Edward Schillebeeckx. SCM, London, 1980. pp 925 £19.50.

Few of us can yet have digested the first volume of Edward Schillebeeckx's massive essay in Christology, reviewed here about the time that he was being "interviewed" by theologians of the Holy Office in Rome about its orthodoxy (*New Blackfriars*, December 1979). One of the three interviewing theologians, Jean Galot S J, himself the author of a large book on Christology of a metaphysically speculative kind, went on Vatican Radio a day or two before the interview to say that Schillebeeckx was in his opinion a heretic, and one of the others, Albert Patfoort O P, to judge by the lectures which he used to give in Paris twenty years ago and also by his equally massive and even more metaphysically speculative writings on St Thomas Aquinas' theories about the ontological implications of the hypostatic union, would not find Schillebeeckx's intentions or methods at all congenial or even intelligible. To the best of our knowledge at the present time (October 1980), however,

the Holy Office has made no judgment on Schillebeeckx's book. It would of course have been very unfair to condemn the work on the evidence of the first volume, which was all that had been delated to Rome. This second volume, from a different publisher and at more than twice the price, although with 150 pages more, has appeared in English with commendable speed (the Dutch original came out in 1977); but the translation, by John Bowden, shows signs of haste. This second volume clearly does not conclude Schillebeeckx's Christology: while not committing himself very far he does say that it might now be possible, after these two volumes, "to make a beginning on what is called 'Christology'" (p 25). The gulf between him and the neo-Thomist theologians of the Holy Office is due far more to differences in Catholic faith – not that *that* is an easy or innocuous distinction!

This volume falls into four sections of very uneven length. In the first volume

Schillebeeckx concentrated on what there was about the "historical Jesus" which gave the thrust to what the New Testament literature claims about him. A hard and fast distinction is not possible but in this second volume he is more immediately concerned with "the New Testament elaboration of what Christians experienced in their encounter with Jesus the Lord" (p 22). The New Testament literature is a multiple echo of the effect upon his first disciples of experience with Jesus. The effect is complex and manifold because of the differing cultural presuppositions, historical situations and personalities in the first generation. The task of the theologian is to disentangle the various versions of Christian experience in such a way as to make it possible to translate the original effect into modern categories of interpretation and understanding. The first eighty pages of the book are, therefore, addressed to general reflections on faith, experience, and interpretation.

Theology is always polemical and much misunderstanding comes from reading statements without paying attention to what they are principally directed against. It is important to notice from the outset that Schillebeeckx is arguing against those, including "quite evidently a number of students of theology" (p 29), who want to make "experience", rather than Scripture and tradition, the starting-point of theology. This only reawakens anti-Modernist anxieties in the older generation of theologians who distrust any appeal to "experience". Schillebeeckx sets out to subvert this dichotomy between faith and experience which he regards as "one of the fundamental reasons for the present crisis among Christians who are faithful to the church" (ibid). It is even more important to notice that he explicitly rejects the idealist notion of experience as some kind of private and incommunicable state of interior disposition, mood or feeling: "experience", throughout this book, is "learning from meeting people and things" (p 31). Whether or not the Modernists fell into the habit of appealing to religious "experiences" of an ineffable and uncontrollable kind it would be a complete misunderstanding to suspect Schillebeeckx of

doing so.

Relying on his reading of much Anglo-American philosophy, Schillebeeckx goes on to subvert the idealist distinction between experience and interpretation: "Interpretation does not begin only when people ask questions about the significance of what they have experienced – interpretation is an intrinsic part of experience itself" (p 19). To "find salvation in Jesus", therefore, is neither a matter of running up against "objective fact" nor a matter of "subjective experience". But it is never easy to steer a course between what Professor Anscombe has called "the falsehoods of idealism" and "the stupidities of realism". Schillebeeckx succeeds in doing so, and recapitulates his argument in a good formula, which the translator has completely misunderstood. The text reads as follows (p 32): "What we experience as objective – what comes to us – is dependent on our concepts and our terms of reference, even independently of our projects and the interests which are served as a result". But Schillebeeckx has added Habermas (*Knowledge and Human Interests*) to Wittgenstein (*Philosophical Investigations*) at this point and the text should read as follows: "What we experience as objective – what happens to us – is also dependent on our concepts and frames of reference, dependent even on our projects and the interests which are served thereby". By omitting the "mit", which I somewhat unsatisfactorily translate as "also", the translator creates the impression that Schillebeeckx is recommending subjective idealism after all, and of a pre-Marxist kind. But the same mistake occurs, much less excusably, in the translation of Wittgenstein's recently published Typescript No 232, and it is worth citing just to underline the point. The translation reads as follows (*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, volume 2, paragraph 296): "Whoever has a word explained by reference to a patch of colour only knows *what* is meant to the extent that he knows *how* the word is to be used. That is to say: there is no grasping or understanding of an object, only the grasping of a technique". Thus as fine a formulation of his position as Wittgenstein ever arrived at is reduced

by the translators to the linguistic idealism of which he is sometimes suspected. The text should read as follows: "Whoever has a word explained by reference to a patch of colour knows *what* is meant only to the extent that he knows *how* the word is to be used. That is to say: there is no grasping or understanding of the object here except by grasping a technique". It is exactly what Schillebeeckx has learned from reading Wittgenstein among others; but if their own translators misunderstood the point it is hardly surprising that the neo-Thomists of the Holy Office smell "subjective idealism".

Much later in the book (p 633) Schillebeeckx says that the relationship between experience and interpretation needs much deeper study than he has given it in these first eighty pages (although, despite what the translator makes him say, he does not promise to do any such deeper study himself).

The second section of the book runs to over 500 pages. It is a set of self-contained monographs, first on the biblical concept of grace, then on St Paul's doctrine of grace (p 113 ff), followed by the suffering of the innocent in I Peter (p 223 ff), grace in Hebrews (p 237 ff), salvation in Jesus according to the Pastoral Epistles (p 293 ff), Jesus and "God is righteous" in the Apocalypse (p 432 ff). Insisting then that, while no "fully consistent synthesis" is feasible, "a fundamentally identical experience underlies the various interpretations to be found throughout the New Testament" (p 463), so that we can at least proceed to "extract the formative structural elements which still give us ... the bearings for formulating our experience of the decisive salvation in Jesus" (ibid). This is obviously the most delicate, and potentially the most controversial, phase of the whole investigation: how – without being reduced to purveying banalities – do we separate the elements in the original Christian experience which must determine our Christian experience?

Only the resurrected Jesus gives salvation: the Spirit, *his* Spirit, God's own Spirit (p 467): what could be clearer? A detailed survey of the images and categories employed in the New Testament shows that

the multiple "interpretative experience" of salvation in God through the mediation of Jesus cannot be reduced either to vague generalities or to slogans about "liberation" (p 512): again, what could be clearer? The concept of creation is of fundamental importance in any theology of grace (p 530): any existentialist concentration on history at the expense of nature is rejected. The Exodus idea is the model which the New Testament gives us for the church, thus anticipating Vatican II (p 560). It is impossible to settle whether Jesus was "political" or "apolitical" (p 584). The ethical demand of the New Testament is clear enough (p 596). There is no Christian theology without a theology of the grace of Israel (p 601), and this whole section concludes with a demonstration that "New Testament anti-semitism is sheer legend" (p 621) and that the biblical fundamentalism of Zionism needs to be demythologized (p 627). Evidently a great deal of ground is covered in these 150 pages: if the summary suggests that it is not always easy to see the wood for the trees that would not be an unfair conclusion.

It is supposed to have been leading towards the third section of the book, at only a dozen pages or so by far the briefest of the four main sections. This is where Schillebeeckx sets out the four structural elements derived from the preceding analysis of the New Testament which must be included in any version of Christianity in which an echo of the gospel is to be heard – "uncurtailed and yet alive today in word and deed" (p 638). The four principles are as follows:

- 1 God himself has guaranteed that human life has a positively significant meaning;
- 2 the nature of God's history with human beings is discoverable ("experientable") in the person and life of Jesus;
- 3 our history is following Jesus – "In particular, the Gospel of John (so often despised) is a model for such a history ..." (p 642); and finally
- 4 the end of this history of God with human beings in Jesus is not itself in our history – "final salvation goes beyond our present experiences" (p 642).

This section concludes as follows (p 644): "The way in which the New Testament has given specific form to the four structural elements ... is doubtless bound up with the views of life current in the ancient world, the historical mediations and specific possibilities of the time ... And precisely because they are historically conditioned they are not directly a norm for today's *memoria Jesu*, even if they are models for the way in which we, in a different historical setting and with different possibilities, can add a chapter here and now to the history of Jesus, the living one".

The fourth and final section of the book, extending to some 200 pages, is a first outline of such a chapter. The starting point is *suffering*: "suffering becomes a problem only for the man who believes in God" (p 672). Surveying first various religious and philosophical attitudes to suffering, in which Thomas Aquinas appears as a touchstone of good sense (pp 728-9), and then offering a rapid critical summary of contemporary theologians such as Karl Rahner, Metz, the Latin American liberation theologians and others, Schillebeeckx returns to the New Testament accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus in his final moving and convincing affirmation of Christian faith (p 837): "What history tells us about Jesus, what the church tells and indeed *promises* us about Jesus is that in this way of life which is in conformity with the message of Jesus and the kingdom of God, we are shown the *real possibility* of an experience

of God ... However, what final possibilities are contained in the eschatological consummation of this saving presence of God, which we celebrate and give thanks for in the liturgy, is God's mystery ... Furthermore, we know from the same history of and about Jesus that the promise of the inward presence of God rests on the futility and the historical failure of this way of life, as on the cross". In the end, we are justified freely through faith by grace (p 838): "Real redemption or salvation always passes over into mysticism: only here can the tension between action and contemplation be sustained - existing for others and thus for that Other, the wholly intimate and near yet 'transcendent God' with whom Jesus has made us familiar".

The whole concept of this book could not be more remote from the metaphysical Christology of Galot, Patfoort and others of that persuasion. This does not mean, on the other hand, as this review has sought to show, that the work of Edward Schillebeeckx may be boiled down either to fashionable liberation theology or even worse to warmed-up liberal Protestantism (charges that have been made). Theological work of this quality, with the questions it raises as well as the learning it communicates and the faith it so manifestly displays, is a rare gift.

FERGUS KERR O P

THE FATE OF THE ANGLICAN CLERGY by Robert Towler and A P M Coxon
Macmillan, 1979. pp x + 248. £15.

This is an important and readable study of the sociology of ministerial training in the Church of England. Both Dr Towler and Professor Coxon were students at the Anglican Hostel of the Resurrection at Leeds, and were intending ordinands. The research on which the book is based began in 1961, with Coxon's project on the social recruitment, selection and professional socialization of Anglican ordinands (Leeds, 1965). This was followed by Towler's thesis on the sociological analysis of pro-

fessional socialization of Anglican ordinands, (Leeds, 1970). According to Towler, most of the original material has been discarded and fresh research undertaken, the whole being completely rewritten for publication in the present form.

Surveys were carried out in 1962, 1966, and 1967, covering, respectively, a 30% sample of all Anglican ordinands in English colleges, one year's intake into St Chad's Durham, Oak Hill, Queen's Birmingham, Mirfield and Westcott House,