

high-minded we suppose the Pharisees to be, the more intelligible their alarm becomes.

Mention of the exorcisms, hardly referred to by Malina, brings us to something that was a key feature of the synoptic portrait of Jesus and which for an anthropologist offers fascinating pointers to the world of the New Testament. Possession by spirits seems to have been a fairly evident feature of Palestinian society. Most recent studies of spirit possession have tended to see it as a means by which the deprived obtain some kind of leverage in society, but it is also possible to see it as a dramatization of an experience of irresistible domination. The episode of the possessing spirit which called itself "Legion" suggests that an experience of political powerlessness might combine with purely personal frustrations. This line of argument would suggest that the exorcisms were not simply cures of the mentally sick, as a liberal exegesis would embarrassingly claim, but a delivery of the poorer Palestinians from

social alienation and passivity.

There are other points in *The New Testament World* at which to niggle might be justifiable. Bruce Malina seems (p 147) to underplay the early Christian understanding of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, and, more generally, to under-rate the importance of Jewish tradition for the Christians of the Pauline churches. However, my main criticism is that this book fails even at the level for which it is intended, because of the author's inadequate grasp of the method (as distinct from the jargon) of social anthropology. Theologians interested in the possibilities of social anthropology for biblical studies should consult the admirable *Sacrifice*, edited by Meyer Fortes and Michael Bourdillon (Cambridge University Press, 1980); social anthropologists whom faith or curiosity have interested in the world of the Gospels should work through Joachim Jeremias' books.

ADRIAN EDWARDS

**YESTERDAY AND TODAY: A Study of Continuities in Christology by
Colin E Gunton, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983. pp xi + 228 £9.50.**

This is a well-written and well-argued book, showing evidence of considerable intellectual power. It is not an easy book, but any difficulty is due to its subject matter and to the level at which it is treated and not to any incompetence on the part of the author. Its primary concern is conveyed by its subtitle and reiterated in more extreme form in the Preface, which speaks of 'the great divide in modern theology. . . . between those who regard modernity as throwing an impassable barrier between ourselves and our Christian past and those who would attempt to see the development of Christian thinking as an unbroken and generally developing process, albeit one which is uneven, episodic and sometimes disrupted' (p ix). That is an uncharacteristically exaggerated statement, apparently allowing any nuanced assessment of the relation of past and present to one side of the divide only. It would probably involve putting the author and the reviewer on the same side of the

divide, thus rendering it a not very helpful typology. Certainly one of the features I most appreciated in the book is its delineation of the complex pattern of similarities and differences between our own age and that of the patristic period. The accounts on pp 53 and 97, for example, are extremely perceptive and helpful. In view of all this it is perhaps a little surprising that Gunton is so ready to endorse Grillmeier's claim that there is 'a straight line of development from the Bible through the Fathers to the Councils' (p 64; cf p 48). No unevenness or disruption at that stage? But the point is not crucial to the argument, since Gunton allows that Chalcedon is not of primary significance to the Christologist, 'because it must remain an open question whether the Definition is itself true to the biblical Christ' (p 30).

The book begins with an analysis of some recent work in Christology, and particularly of the popular classification of Christologies into those 'from below' and

those 'from above'. The discussion is very well conducted, and some useful distinctions and clarifications are made. The author then turns to the New Testament, which (in view of the remark about Chalcedon just quoted) is bound to be of crucial significance for his thesis. Here I am less happy with the discussion. My unease concerns both method and content. He rightly insists that if we are to understand the New Testament documents we must recognise that their picture of Jesus is theological through and through, guided by a view of God's relation to history that is characteristic of the Old Testament. But this important truth is always in danger of slipping over into the much bigger claim that as Christians we have to share that view. We have either 'to believe – or to disbelieve – the texts' (p 60); we can see the New Testament writers either as 'variously interpreting a reality other than themselves, or simply projecting on to poorly understood historical realities a pattern of experience' (p 72). The dichotomies are too sharply drawn. In terms of content he rightly insists on the way in which divine and human affirmations are both applied to Jesus right through; but the claim that Jesus was very early regarded as having 'equality in eternity and divinity' (p 73) seems to me a much more questionable judgment.

But the language that Gunton himself uses in the more systematic part of the work is neither that of the New Testament nor of the Fathers. For him the central conviction is the co-presence of the eternal and the temporal, 'the divine love become spatio-temporally present in Jesus' (p 127); 'in the spatio-temporal life of a man God has become real among us' (p 134). This continually recurring language of God's presence is highly attractive; among other things it contributes to an excellent account of the language of pre-existence (p 133). But it is also very imprecise. How

much of the older forms of Christological claim are implied by it?

It is here that I sense an ambiguity in Gunton's position. He relieves himself and us of a lot of the tedious debates of traditional Christology by insisting 'that Christology is not a matter of how we prove that a man is God, but of how the love of God becomes real in the world' (p 168) – and for that relief much thanks. But he still does want to say (on the basis of the same kind of soteriological argument adduced by Irenaeus, Gregory of Nazianzus and Anselm) that 'Jesus Christ is both fully man and fully God' (p 181). But can he appropriately make an affirmation in that form without facing more precisely what it involves for Jesus and the life that he lived in Palestine? He defends the dyothelites against the monothelites on the ground that they were preserving 'the gospel's claim that through the human career of a man the saving purposes of God were made real in time' (p 92). (And on that basis he awards them the highest accolade of being anti-dualistic, since 'dualism' is the great sin of all Platonists and post-Kantians!). But such a defence simply evades the issue. For it does not face the difficulties of ascribing the two wills to the one person of Jesus, but is content with the easier task of relating them simply to the effects of his career.

This focuses the main question with which I am left by this searching and thoughtful book. If Gunton is to enjoy the full benefits which his preferred conceptuality seems to offer, will he not have to admit a greater degree of discontinuity with the past than he wishes? But if he wants to claim the measure of continuity that he clearly does want to claim, then I do not see how he can avoid having to treat more directly some of the old puzzles that in this book he simply leaves on one side.

MAURICE WILES

OPTION FOR THE POOR: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching by Donal Dorr. Gill & Macmillan, pp 328. £7.95.

Father Donal Dorr has taught theology and philosophy in Ireland as well as having a wide experience of academic and pasto-

ral work in Africa and South America; his book was written while he held the Cardinal Conway Fellowship in the Theology