

who is present in our speech. There is no such 'object' to be known. It would be like trying to escape from language itself into the fantasy of absolute knowledge. In another sense, no: the doctrine of the trinity (as the Cappadocians and Augustine alike insist) does not give us theoretical or conceptual information on what it is to be God. 'God' is simply whatever it is we encounter in the mutually-related, mutually-definitory creative and recreative agencies we name 'Father', 'Son' or 'Word' and 'Spirit'.

Is this so very alien to what Professor Wiles wants? I think (especially in the light of some of the remarks on p 127 about the separation of trinitarian doctrine from

considerations about God's relation to the world) that the trinitarianism he rejects is a remarkably attenuated version. I hope one day he may have more to say about this. As in so much of his writing, he prompts the desire for the conversation to continue. This book itself testifies to his own exemplary willingness to listen and to respond in the conversation of theology; and I hope it is no derogation from this book's worthwhileness to say that it is more of an invitation and a goad to draw us on than any kind of systematic resolution of our shared difficulties.

ROWAN WILLIAMS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST JOHN, VOL III, by Rudolf Schnackenburg, translated by David Smith and G. A. Kon.

Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament.

Burns & Oates, London, 1982. pp x + 510. £28.00.

This third volume completes Schnackenburg's great commentary on the Fourth Gospel. The three volumes together total 1722 pages, beating Raymond Brown (1374), and a long way ahead of Bultmann. It must certainly be reckoned the most detailed and the most up-to-date commentary on the gospel. It also has the advantage of dealing more fully with the Greek text than Brown's very good book. With the space at his disposal Schnackenburg has been able to mention at every point practically every exegetical possibility and consider the merits of each. That one may from time to time disagree with his assessment derogates in no way from the value of his work. Readers will turn to such a book for full information and will not be disappointed; they will find also a wise and fair-minded guide, and a sober judge.

The present volume deals with Chapters 13-21. The verse-by-verse commentary can be reviewed only in the general terms I have already used. No serious theological library can afford, even in the present economic circumstances, to be without it. The volume also contains four Excursus (Nos. 15-18 of the whole) and a section headed "Outlook: On the Significance of John's Gospel Today". It will be more

profitable to look briefly at these than to pick out the notes on a few verses.

Excursus 15 is on "The Johannine Last Supper and its Problems". John (Schnackenburg thinks) is not giving a theologically motivated variation on the synoptic but following a different tradition. His interest is theological rather than historical, and concentrates upon the person of Jesus as he goes to his death in perfect love for his own. This may possibly account for the absence from John's narrative of the "institution of the eucharist", for the washing of the disciples' feet adequately portrays John's theme.

Excursus 16 deals with "the Paraclete and the Sayings about the Paraclete". John took over the name from tradition, where it may have originated in the synoptic material touching the aid given to disciples when on trial, but he then elaborated its meaning, which must be read out of the sayings themselves. These show us a community guided and instructed by the Spirit, but receiving this teaching through qualified leaders – standing therefore within the mainstream of primitive Christianity.

Schnackenburg returns to this theme in Excursus 17, discussing the concept of dis-

ipleship and the ecclesial images used in the gospel. He disputes with Käsemann the evangelist's attitudes to mission and to the universal church, though he recognizes that John's Christological interest gives him an emphasis different from other parts of the New Testament.

The last excursus, though its title is "The Disciple whom Jesus loved", may be best represented by the quotation of part of the final paragraph, which summarises Schnackenburg's views about the origin of the gospel. "Our last canonical gospel came into being over a rather long period in the course of which traditions of varying origin were taken up ... editors of like mind with the evangelist issued his work with some insertions and additions ... John's gospel finally rests upon the authority of an apostle who, admittedly, did not take a direct share in the process of the work's coming into being, but remains more in the background as the one handing down the tradition and as 'witness'" (p 388).

Out of the concluding "Outlook" I pick only the paragraph that claims that "the great strength of the Johannine gospel is the *existential way of looking at things*, the addressing of man in his human existence" (p 392), and I pick it out because it leads through a brief recapitulation of John's understanding of salvation to what can only be described as a confession of faith. "I would only stress the unconquerable strength that can proceed from it, for modern man as well" (p 393). Here is a major clue to Schnackenburg's greatness as an expositor.

As in Volume II [see *New Blackfriars* 61 (1980), pp 445f.] there are signs of hasty proof-reading, though the disappearance of Hebrew (except in the designation of Codex Sinaiticus) has removed a number of occasions of stumbling. Typographical slips, however, are very small blemishes in what is undoubtedly one of the best of commentaries, a book that merits the highest praise.

C. K. BARRETT

WITH PITY NOT WITH BLAME, by Robert Llewelyn. *Darton, Longman and Todd*. 1982. pp 148. £3.95.

This is an attractive, well-written and sensible book on christian attitudes to life and, in particular, on quiet prayer. It is largely based on Julian of Norwich, with some support from *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Jung and oriental religions. Its message, as the title suggests, is that we should be gentler with our own lives, rather than grimly perfectionist.

Those who come to this book seeking help for their own lives will, I think, not be disappointed or misled. But those who come looking for a serious presentation of Julian of Norwich (and the book is subtitled "Reflections on the writings of Julian of Norwich and on *The Cloud of Unknowing*") are, I am afraid, in for a certain disappointment. The author, rather irritatingly, misquotes on several occasions, he also implies that Julian is saying things which she is certainly not saying – for instance, he makes out that in LT 6 Julian is attacking the habit of "pestering God with petitions", whereas Julian is actually dealing with an entirely differ-

ent point, the contemporary habit of appealing to God by every conceivable means instead of simply appealing to his goodness. He also persistently ignores what is surely one of Julian's great strengths, namely her metaphysical toughness. This leads, for instance, to a trivialising of Julian's claim that, though we fall in our own sight, we do not fall in God's sight. A similar lack of metaphysical concern is apparent in the author's rather jejune comment on Manichaeism, as if the essence of the heresy were a commonplace dualism between matter and spirit, whereas the real danger of Manichaeism is its ascription of an autonomous ontological status to evil.

But, if this book perhaps fails in its secondary purpose, it does not fail in its primary purpose, as a work of spiritual instruction. It is, in a true sense, an edifying book; unusually, for such books, it is also courteous and easy to read.

SIMON TUGWELL O P