exchange seems to be the currency which more and more enables exchange, a pattern of discipline is proffered altogether more settled and low-key and which pervades the views and life-style of Letty Russell to which this book bears witness. In some ways it harks back to another age of theological formation which is at once less exciting and yet more lasting, more enduring if less spectacular. From an Oxford perspective there is evoked, albeit in a North American context, a vision of a properly functioning tutorial system in which habits of life are communicated as much by example and shared search for wisdom. Such are important ways of engaging with the theological task.

In addition, the importance of the church connection is most welcome. This is in no sense a backward-looking or conservative element. Far from it. It is a vital part of the theological task and one which is recognised as such. For one like myself, who have never met Letty Russell and have only been acquainted with her writings, there is evoked in the pages of this book a life in theological education which deserves to be marked by a tribute whose significance is demonstrated as much by the range of the contributors as the subject-matter, both of which testify to a remarkable theological career.

CHRIS ROWLAND

COLERIDGE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION: *AIDS TO REFLECTION* AND THE MIRROR OF THE SPIRIT by Douglas Hedley *Cambridge University Press*, **Cambridge, 2000. Pp. xiv + 330, £45.00.**

Coleridge, who is rightly admired as a poet and wrongly neglected as a thinker (as Douglas Hedley points out), planned his *Aids to Reflection* over a number of years, during this time changing his mind about its shape and content, though not about its fundamental thrust.

His first intention, reflecting his lifelong habit of annotating everything he read, was that it should be a commentary on the works of Robert Leighton, a 17th century divine, and Archbishop of Glasgow, who had been revered as much for his personal saintliness as for his writing. Reading Leighton seems to have helped Coleridge through a period of crisis, spiritual as well as physical, during 1813-4, and the affinity he felt for Leighton's work, both its thought and its prose, made such a commentary (first mooted in 1822) seem like an ideal way of sketching out his own religious position. He proposed to collect 'aphorisms' or 'beauties' (those passages which had struck him most forcibly) from Leighton's writings, and enlarge upon their importance. In the event, in the first edition of 1825, the actual 'aphorisms', some very long, are preponderantly Coleridge's own: comments, nevertheless, remain. Important footnotes also abound. But Coleridge's purpose remained the same: to show that Christianity is something richer, more life-giving, and more demanding than the tendency of his day — proving its 'truth' from the evidence of e.g. miracles — made it seem. That addressed itself to the intellect only. Christianity demanded the response of the whole thinking and knowing self.

In his book, Hedley aims to set out Coleridge's 'philosophy of religion' as presented in his major published work *Aids to Reflection*, and in

particular to try to put the book into some context. The latter, as Hedley points out, is particularly important both because Coleridge's original thinking has a very complex relationship to his omnivorous reading, and because, original though Coleridge was, he was inevitably influenced by the spirit of his age, whose religious assumptions, Hedley argues, we tend to underestimate. Hedley notes how some commentators, troubled by the relation of German 'idealism' to Coleridge's 'theism' or the topic of 'pantheism', in fact import 20th century perspectives which do not represent an increase in wisdom, but a fundamental rejection of Coleridge's assumptions. For Hedley, Coleridge belongs to a Christian Platonic tradition which stretches from John Scot Eriugena to Hegel, which sees Jerusalem and Athens in harmony, and is inclined to identify philosophy with theology. 'This is an odd position for contemporary minds, but is not a symptom of Coleridge's intellectual aberrations' (p.4).

The author then attempts to disentangle the various strands of thought which influenced Coleridge, or which pervaded the thought of his day, and he makes careful distinctions between various kinds of Platonism and Neo-Platonism, between different understandings of 'Idealism' (German and other), and considers the ways in which Coleridge used, but did not necessarily agree with, the philosophies of Kant and Schelling, as well as those of the 17th-century Cambridge Platonists. Indeed, he compares and differentiates Coleridge's thought from that of an impressively wide range of philosophies: from Aristotle and Augustine through Locke and Berkeley to Coleridge's contemporaries and beyond. He is very good on Coleridge's opposition to Paley, whose *Evidences of Christianity* was a compulsory text for all Cambridge undergraduates from 1822. To this end he skilfully sketches the philosophical and religious background of Joseph Priestly's Unitarianism, which underpins Paley's position, and he points to the interesting distinction in this respect between the situation in England and on the Continent.

The argument is important to an understanding of Coleridge who, though brought up in his vicar father's Anglican Church, in his early twenties considered becoming a Unitarian preacher at Wem. It is also important to the thesis of Hedley's book, namely, that the speculative or philosophical doctrine of the Trinity is the central idea, or better, the hidden agenda in *Aids to Reflection*. A Trinitarian philosophy, as Hedley rightly considers, is essential to Coleridge's view of Redemption. This is not achieved by following the precepts and teachings of Jesus as an exponent of moral and ethical standards, but by discovering and becoming at one with Christ indwelling in us and, in a Pauline way, entering into his life, death and resurrection.

Hedley also gives a survey of the philosophical use of the aphorism; discusses the meanings of 'Reflections' in Coleridge as both meditative thought and as a mirroring of God in man, and hence the importance of the dictum 'Know Thyself'; points to Coleridge's religious interest in the philosophical nature of language — religious and philosophical because related to the Johannine use of 'The Word' and the implications of the Greek term *logos*; and indicates how this has a bearing on Coleridge's understanding of Scripture, and the nature of 'truth'. The chapter headings are also enticing:

The true philosopher is a lover of God; Inner Word; The Image of God; God is Truth; The Great Instauration; The vision of God, all of which indicate the kind of religious thinker Hedley considers Coleridge to be.

In those passages which deal, relatively straightforwardly, with Coleridge's thought in *Aids to Reflection* Hedley succeeds in making Coleridge the interesting, though rarely easy, religious philosopher he is. But, though it may be necessary to give Coleridge his rightful status by showing that he is not just a muddled purveyor of other people's ideas, the erudition with which Hedley accomplishes this task becomes a distraction if one is interested in Coleridge's thought rather than the multifarious dependencies and distinctions between one kind of philosophical and religious position and another (-isms abound). Of itself this is a kind of *tour de force*. But it is also a disincentive for anyone but a scholar who has a good grasp of the history of Western religious philosophy and can also read Greek (quotations are not transliterated). This is a pity, since, as Hedley wishes to maintain and in some measure succeeds in showing, Coleridge deserves to be better known not only as a poet but also as a religious thinker. At the very least, however, Hedley's book is a welcome counterweight to those critics who underestimate Coleridge's achievements.

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LAY SANCTITY, MEDIEVAL AND MODERN: A SEARCH FOR MODELS edited by Ann W.Astell *University of Notre Dame Press*, **South Bend, IN, 2000. Pp. x + 250, £29.95 hbk.**

This book of essays, which came into being as a result of a conference to explore the challenging and changing historical relationships between medieval and modern ideas of laity and sanctity, examines the discrepancy between canonisation and lay status. The interest of the various participants is concisely summed up in Anne Askell's introduction. First, as she points out, it is important that the official Church should recognise and take seriously the sanctity of lay men and women as a model for life in the Church.

In focusing on the lives of specific personages and movements, the questions this book sets out to ask are summed up in the first few pages. Namely: what distinguishes the spirituality and sanctity of the laity from that of religious? To what extent must laity orient themselves towards monastic ideals and practices in pursuit of holiness? Is it really possible to become holy 'in the world' or must one retreat from it? Does marital sex, ownership of property and involvement in politics impede sanctity, or the recognition of sanctity by the Church, and if so, why? Is lay sanctity something inferior to the sanctity of religious? Why have so few lay saints been canonised, resulting in so few canonically recognised models of lay sanctity? Here it would be germane to draw attention to the lack of married saints. It needs to be asked whether marriage and sainthood are in some sense mutually exclusive or, rather, has this dearth more to do with which holy lives are promoted and written up?

In a collection of essays, the variety of topics will mean that some appeal to a particular reader more than others. Part One on the medieval period covers lay sanctity and Church reform in France (Mary Skinner),