

The bibliography makes some useful suggestions. Omissions are: the *Pro Mundi Vita* Bulletin on the Church and the Ideology of National Security; Gheerbrant's Pelican book on the Rebel Church in Latin America; and the Medellin and Puebla con-

clusions which are obtainable from CIIR.

For a popular book the price is a bit daunting; for a serious book the cover is a bit garish and sensational. Activists should buy it and lend it to their friends.

COLIN CARR O P

FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY by Gerald O'Collins, *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1981 pp 283 £5.95

Dr O'Collins is already well-known for a number of short studies dealing with some of the basic issues in Christian theology in a manner that is both lively and well-informed. He has now set himself the task of writing a more 'substantial study in Christian fundamental theology' (p 1), with special emphasis on the themes of revelation, tradition and inspiration. The larger undertaking has not led to any great change in approach. The wide knowledge of contemporary theological writing is still in evidence, and the lively even conversational, style remains.

Before dealing directly with his three main themes, he emphasises the fundamental role of human experience in relation to the divine self-communication in Christ. His account of human experience is well done and helps the reader to recognise that what is at issue is not some reshuffling of old text book notions but a better understanding of the nature of the life of faith.

So the book promises well. And at one level it can be acknowledged as the sensitive reflections of a Christian scholar, aware of the problems posed to theology by the contemporary world, showing how they can be assimilated within the traditional structures of catholic faith. But at another level it disappoints. For although Dr O'Collins is aware of the problems theology has to face today, it appears sometimes as if he has not really felt on the pulses the full impact of their challenge. And so traditional answers are (with some modifications, it is true) continued or reinstated too comfortably for comfort. He speaks on occasion of the response of faith as involving confession, commitment and confidence. These are important character-

istics for a theologian and he has them in good measure; but the confidence seems at times to sweep all before it too quickly.

Let me illustrate the sort of ground that gives rise to these misgivings from three sections:

i Dr O'Collins takes a positive view of the saving significance of some non-christian religious practices. But he wants also to insist that such salvation is through Christ. In arguing his case he claims that it is a fruit of the incarnation that 'hereafter to know God through other men and women and through the world would be to know God through the incarnate Christ' (p 117). It may be that this is the right line along which to seek a solution of the problem, but a claim of that kind, not about the divine word but about the incarnate Christ, seems to me too easily asserted and to offer too cavalier an answer to the question.

ii On p 211 the Vincentian Canon ('That which has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone - this is truly and properly Catholic') is cited. On p 215 we are told that 'it could ultimately be rephrased this way: What we can discover to have been believed and practised *at least* sometimes, in some places and by some Christians as part of the good news and which promises once again to be *life-giving* - that can truly and properly direct our discernment of present traditions and experiences'. "Rephrased" seems something of an understatement.

iii The discussion of inspiration provides the most striking example. Dr O'Collins is no fundamentalist. He is as well aware as any of us of the ways in which the scriptural books came to be written, and of the varied forms of moral and religious atti-

tudes they embody. But he still insists that 'all the verses of the Bible are inspired and written under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit' (p 240) and that 'the charism of inspiration guided and guaranteed the Scriptures to a degree that no writings from the post-apostolic tradition . . . could ever claim' (pp 247-8). Since he acknowledges that inspiration is not limited to Scripture and believes that the degree of it differs for different scriptural books, it is difficult to give sense to this 'special guidance'. It sounds like a continuing commit-

ment to the old affirmations, even where the conceptions that underlay the older affirmations have changed out of all recognition.

So while I welcome Dr O'Collin's search for continuity of faith and theological understanding in the changing circumstances of the present time and find myself in agreement with much of what he has to say, I believe that the continuity we seek will need a greater measure of discontinuity within it than he envisages. The problems that face us bite deeper than he acknowledges.

MAURICE WILES

RELIGION IN NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY
T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh 1980. pp 216.

edited by Brian Colles and Peter Donovan.

The twelve essays collected in this volume cover the main divisions of religion in New Zealand – Maori religious movements, the Roman Church; the Protestants (Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists chiefly); the sects; the Jews; the new movements from India (Ananda Marga and the Hare Krishna Movement, and, more marginally, the Divine Light Mission, and Transcendental Meditation). The remaining essays are devoted to ecumenism, the Charismatic movement (which is, of course, interdenominational, the tendency towards pluralism in religion, and a discussion of the role of religious studies in the country.

The contributors do not all come from the same discipline, and the sociologically informed essays of Michael Hill (on sectarianism) and Kapil Tiwari (on the new Indian movements) contrast sharply with the rather bland discussion of Catholicism in the country by E. H. Blasoni. Perhaps the study of Judaism is the most stimulating and informative in the volume: its author, David Pitt examines the pressures inducing assimilation of New Zealand's less than 4,000 Jews, and the resistance to it. Basically, he sees that social structural factors, such as the diminished household role of women, have promoted the decline of religious observance. Young people are no

longer socialized, as he observes, by the network of kinsfolk, but by peer groups. In such a circumstance, can any traditional religion survive with anything like the same vigour?

The story of religion in New Zealand reflects, as these writers are aware, patterns that are familiar in the West. The major churches have in recent years all lost adherents – at least, as membership is counted by what people say on the census forms. The Anglicans, who constituted 40% of the population, accounting for less than 30% in 1976, and even the Catholics, who grew from about 13% of the population in 1926 to nearly 16% in 1966, have since then dropped back again. Lloyd Geering, who discusses these trends, maintains that the real decline in participation has been even greater than these figures suggest. Some small religious groups have grown, particularly the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, but the real leakage from the major denominations has been to that category of people who profess no religion, or who object to stating a religious preference: this group is now the second largest component in the country.

Against the decline in religion must be matched the growth in Religious Studies, which appears to be a thriving discipline in New Zealand's universities, and for