

'the kind of theology which has sought to make Christian faith independent of the vagaries of historical scholarship' is in a cleft stick. . . . Claims to recognize Christ in present experience, if they are to be justified, themselves presuppose historical knowledge of Jesus. Thus the kind of theology which most needs to make such claims is least able to justify them!' (p. 133). He divides views about the crucial question of the resurrection of Jesus into two classes: the *Event* theory and the *Theological* theory: 'For the *Event* theory the belief that Jesus is risen presupposes historical statements about the empty tomb and bodily appearances of the risen Jesus to his disciples. For the *Theological* theory belief that Jesus is risen appears as a theological judgment upon the course of his life and the manner of his death. But in that case it clearly relies even more than the *Event* theory upon knowledge of the historical Jesus' (pp. 133f). In a detailed argument Mr Cupitt destroys various forms of the *Theological* theory and here he is, I think, on very firm ground. I am less convinced by his discussion of the *Event* theory, nor am I altogether clear what his own position is. He does, however, appear to view the authenticity of the resurrection narratives in the gospels as unimportant. 'It does not seem to me', he writes, 'that we are in a position to say clearly what the supposed Resurrection-Event was (that is, what the appearances of the risen Lord to the disciples were like), or to establish historically either the occurrence of the event or the authenticity of the Apostles' experiences. It is quite possible that the dawning resurrection-faith gave rise to remarkable resurrection-experiences. But these experiences are logically secondary, not primary. Their historical uncertainty, therefore, is not of very great moment' (pp. 166f).

In spite of the acuteness of his argument in many places, I find Mr Cupitt strangely elusive as regards his own position, which he sums up as follows:

Christ now is not indicable, nor can his existence be inferred in a valid argument.

Talk of the present Christ could have a reference and does have a use, but that reference cannot be satisfactorily established. The believer gives it an historical reference: Christ is none other than Jesus, exalted as Lord. And he gives it a present use. For the rest, he believes that he knows Christ in the sense that he will recognize him when he sees him, and that he now knows God through him (p. 213).

There is much in Mr Cupitt's book that I find stimulating and illuminating; he gives a detailed analysis of many positions which are only too often accepted without criticism and drastically exposes the weakness of the anti-rational kerygmatic school. But I cannot help suspecting that at the end of it all he falls into a not very dissimilar position. And I would single out two aspects of his discussion that need to be questioned. First—and this stands out in his treatment of the empty tomb and the risen body of Jesus—much clearer recognition needs to be given to the principle that grace and the supernatural neither destroy or ignore nature but presuppose and transform it, if one is to do justice to the resurrection narratives and their implications. And secondly, much more detailed investigation is needed than even Mr Cupitt gives of the methodological and metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) assumptions which underlie the fashionable scepticism of so many modern New-Testament scholars. Dr Humphrey Palmer, in *The Logic of Gospel Criticism*, has laid some very necessary foundations for this task, but his work has received little attention. On this whole matter of historicity Dr A. R. C. Leancy has written: 'It is impossible to prophesy how this debate will continue; it must seem to all who contemplate it to have reached a profoundly unsatisfactory stage' (*Pelican Guide to Modern Theology*, vol. iii, p. 263). I think Mr Cupitt might have helped more than he has if he had not at the critical moment suffered from that loss of nerve upon which Dr Torrance (p. 107) remarks as having affected some theologians in this country.

E. L. MASCALL

**THE OBJECT OF MORALITY**, by G. J. Warnock. *Methuen and Co.*, London, 1971. x and 168 pp. £1.80 hb, or 90p pb.

Despite a stimulating chapter, *Moral Virtues*, which would have been worth developing on its own, this new book is generally disappointing.

As the title indicates, the book seeks to explain both what 'morality' is about and what

it is for. Chapter 1 arrives by elimination at the subject matter of moral philosophy: "'morality", "moral" judgment, "moral" problems . . . bring in a *particular kind* of appraisal or evaluation of people, and their possible or actual doings.' (But so does

'gossip'.) So 'the central task' is to see 'what this particular mode of appraisal actually consists in'. Chapter 2 tells us that the 'general object of moral evaluation must be to contribute in some respects, by way of the actions of rational beings, to the amelioration of the human predicament'. (The same is true of the general object of cookery books.) In the human predicament, things tend to go badly, and resources are as a matter of fact limited. The limitation of sympathies is the most important one. ('Sympathy' here has benign emotive connotations, it is not Hume's neutral 'sympathy'.) 'It is the proper business of morality not . . . to make us more rational in the judicious pursuit of our interests and ends' but to 'expand our sympathies'.

1. Is there never call for *narrowing* sympathies selectively? e.g. of those whose sympathy flows out to dogs shot to stop them savaging children. 2. If Warnock is looking for something whose 'proper business' is to 'expand our sympathies', it is not 'morality' but behavioural conditioning which would seem to be called for:

Chapter 3, leaning on Hodgson, rejects act-utilitarianism. Chapters 4 and 5 dismiss rule-utilitarianism.

Chapter 6, *Moral Virtue*, asks 'what is the apparatus of moral evaluation *for*?', but offers an answer, interesting if true, to the different question as to how moral behaviour make for human betterment. It does so by involving '*good dispositions*' which lead men to organize to keep chaos at bay where coercion might fail. Good dispositions which merely make betterment possible (industriousness, courage, self-control . . .) are not to be held virtues, whereas those which tend to bring betterment about are. The four virtues are non-maleficence, 'fairness—or, more formally, justice', beneficence and non-deception. (In fact what he needs for his purposes here is not non-deception but non-undermining of trust.) 'To have and to display, say, the moral virtue of non-deception could be said to regulate one's conduct in conformity to a *principle* of non-deception, or to refer to that as to a *standard* in one's practical decisions.' (This could be rewritten to meet objections.) And 'a "moral reason" is a consideration . . . which tends to establish in the subject concerned conformity or conflict with a moral principle'. (Any consideration? Then conditioning and threats are moral reasons. Some particular kind of consideration? Then what kind?) The principles connected with the four virtues are 'basic moral principles . . . not reducible either

to one another or to anything else'. Because these principles are independent, 'predicaments may arise which are, literally, insoluble'. (The difficulty here seems to come from Warnock's treating 'principle' genetically. A similar difficulty is sometimes put in objection to Hume and, less appropriately, to modern emotivists: Mr Warnock announces it as something his system can be proud of.)

In Chapter 7, promising—and, more generally, putting oneself under an obligation—is treated as a kind of prediction. If I keep a promise, then I spoke truly when I made it; if not, then I spoke falsely. Non-deception urges us to bring it about that we spoke truly, but other virtues can sometimes urge more strongly. (This doctrine that we are morally bound to add to the stock of true statements rather than false ones, in this way, is an intriguing one. Are we morally bound to do so in other ways too? Have you proved your daily theorem yet? Made your daily discovery? Exposed your morning fallacy? Resigned from your teaching post, to flee proximate occasions of uttering falsehoods?)

Chapter 8 says: 1. 'There are *some* moral truths and falsehoods, some moral knowledge' though "moral qualities" are not objective features of the world.' (Then what?) 2. 'To study the language of morality is to study language, not morality, and even so, there is no special philosophical interest in the language of *morality*.' 3. Religious belief can impinge on moral behaviour.

Chapter 9. It was taken in an earlier chapter that what makes people eligible to be considered or judged as moral agents is that they are in a sense rational, not that they belong to a particular biological species. What gives a claim to moral respect is not however 'potential rationality' but 'the capability of suffering the ills of the predicament'. (So my putter has a claim to moral respect because I could smash it in my ill-temper?) From page 160 to page 162 the book largely dissolves its own contentions, with the admission that 'betterment' could be evaluated as being downright wrong, and that even if it were not, it could be seen to be futile. So much, in either case, for the object of morality.

Thus if morality, in Mr Warnock's notion of this, is to have an object, key words like 'betterment', 'amelioration', 'going badly' are not being taken purely descriptively, and are having positive evaluative content built into them from the outset; which is precisely the contention of the non-descriptivism which he so

summarily dismissed. Either he does not see that this puts him among the non-descriptivists, or does not explain in what his own presupposed non-descriptivism consists, and in what it is preferable to the brands he has passed over.

Another major weakness in the book is the ambiguity or obscurity in Mr Warnock's use of 'morality'. This word is used to designate sometimes a set of linguistic expressions (a normative ethical theory), sometimes a set of behaviours, and sometimes, unhappily, to designate one at one stage of an argument, the other at another, where the validity of the argument requires non-ambiguity. Cf. 'in so far as morality may be said . . . to have for its object the mitigation of suffering [i.e. the 'it' refers to a causal entity, like an aspirin, capable of mitigating suffering] . . . what it offers as reasons . . . are actually reasons' [i.e. the 'it' refers to a conceptual entity, like a proof, capable of offering reasons]. The sense in which humans may 'offer reasons' is not relevant

here]. Also, not a few bold generalizations in the book are questionable, not a few assumptions calmly taken, far from banal.

Has Mr Warnock succeeded in giving 'a reasonably general "account" of morality, neither fragmented into unobviously related details, nor emptied of substance'? Where he has done well, as in the earlier chapters, others have done at least as well already. Where, as in Chapter 6, he offers something less battle-worn, he argues less well, though the need for argument is greater there. Perhaps it is well for moral philosophers that Mr Warnock has not succeeded. For if all morality could do (with dubious success, so far as one can see) were what behavioural conditioning can claim more plausibly to be able to do, to 'expand our limited sympathies', it might be better simply to declare the bankruptcy of 'morality'.

Italics proliferate in this book like spots in measles.

LAWRENCE MOONAN

**A HISTORY OF APOLOGETICS**, by Avery Dulles. *Hutchinson and Co.*, London, 1971. 289 pp. £4.

This impressive piece of historical scholarship is one of the Theological Resources series published jointly by Hutchinson and Corpus. In offering the reader a clear, concise and balanced history of apologetics Dulles draws on his immense knowledge of this field compiled in two decades of research, teaching and writing.

The book is divided into six main sections: apologetics in the New Testament, the Patristic era, the Middle Ages, the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. Dulles' method is to present briefly the major contributions of each of these periods, to show the shifts in apologetics as Christian writers adjusted to shifting challenges, to demonstrate a certain continuity and discontinuity as apologetics developed, and to analyse and summarize briefly the contributions of each period. As in his *Revelation Theology* (Herder, 1969) Dulles writes a basically objective account and strives 'to keep my subjective views from obscuring the materials themselves' (p. xvii). Considering the merit of Dulles' views this would be an impoverishment were it not for the fact that he promises a companion volume on the theory of apologetics. As a (masterful) historical narrative the present volume stands on its own merits: but one of the values of historical knowledge is to liberate oneself from one's history. For this reason alone I think a book on

apologetic theory by Dulles, whose background in this field is *nonpareil* and whose methodology is always precise, is an urgent necessity for this era of future—shock.

The volume under review provides readers seriously interested in historical theology with a thorough yet brief conspectus of the history of one vital aspect of theology; further, it affords a brief glimpse of the *zeitgeist* and of the thought of the towering figures in this history. If the reader likes what he sees (and in this volume he only sees an introduction) he can go to the works of the writers themselves. Many of these writers faced challenges not wholly dissimilar to those of today. They still have insights that are of use to Christians seeking to respond to today's ultimate concerns. Justin, Aquinas, Schleiermacher, Newman, Blondel, are all with us once again, not only in dissertations but even on the BBC. And the reason for this is that they have something to say. When the very reality of God has (until recently) been called absent or dead, we have good reason to look to apologists who confronted pagans, Averroists, idealists and rationalists. And when Christianity is in diaspora we have reason to look to—let us say—Athenagoras and his colleagues of the pre-Constantinian epoch. A knowledge of history not only liberates us from our past; it provides the foundations for building on what is valuable in that past.