

ASCENT TO THE ABSOLUTE: METAPHYSICAL PAPERS AND LECTURES, by J. N. Findlay. *Allen and Unwin*, London, 1970. 271 pp. £3.00.

To a reviewer who was brought up in the afterglow of Anglo-Hegelianism, the title of this book has a definitely nostalgic quality. To be sure, for at least a generation 'Absolute' has been virtually a bad word, not to be uttered in respectable academic circles. But now one may ask whether the shades of Bradley and his contemporaries are coming back among us.

Findlay does like to stress the differences between himself and the Anglo-Hegelians of an earlier time. His earlier book on Hegel did indeed give a more faithful interpretation of that great philosopher than did most of his English disciples. Findlay's strength lies in the fact that he has gone through the analytic phase, so that when he turns to speculative questions he does not lose himself in some cloudy heights but keeps in touch with distinctions, definitions, alternatives. In this, he believes that he is keeping close to Hegel, though the intellectual disciplines of Husserl are also in evidence. Yet in spite of the differences, many things in Findlay's philosophy recall the Anglo-Hegelians. For instance, on pages 110-11 we meet something very like Bradley's doctrine of the degrees of truth, when Findlay writes: 'Truth in the ordinary acceptance is an all-or-none affair; it either hits its relatively broad target or misses it. But truth to the appearances, to the matter before us, to what we encounter in experience and thought, is an infinitely graded matter.'

Since the book consists of a collection of papers, it is inevitably repetitious, while some of the pieces seem to be only loosely related to the main theme. That main theme is metaphysics—and Findlay declares without blushing that it is a full-blooded revisionary metaphysics that interests him, not a merely descriptive one, to use Strawson's terminology. The metaphysical task is described in various ways throughout the book. Among other things, it involves 'a profound sinking of our mind in the sense of words, an examination of this sense

from wonted and unwonted angles, an attrition of case upon case, a giving heed to questions, protests and promptings not normally felt, a descent into minutiae that ordinarily escape notice and an ascent to generalities not ordinarily hazarded . . .' (p. 110).

Chiefly, the book is concerned with the ascent to the idea of the Absolute. Its most valuable feature is its examination of the logic of an Absolute. What must be the formal structure of an Absolute? According to Findlay, an Absolute to which a cosmos of finite entities is necessary is more of an Absolute than one that could exist apart from such a cosmos. (Of course, Bradley's Absolute too was nothing apart from its appearances.) It is also asserted that an Absolute must have contingent and non-essential features as well as essential ones.

The theological implications of Findlay's reflections are obvious. His discussion of the qualities of an Absolute (p. 178) reminds one of theological meditation on the attributes of God. Is the Absolute God? Findlay raises this question on page 73. The suggestion is that although God has been conceived in various ways in different religions, the term might best be reserved for the Absolute. A weakness of Findlay's book, however, is his lack of acquaintance with theology. At least, he gives no evidence of such acquaintance, alluding from time to time to 'orthodox theology' and 'Semitic-Christian religion' without once following his own recipe of descending into the minutiae and discussing the position of some specific theologians. His allusions to the Eastern religions have more substance, but are also too general.

Nevertheless, this is an important and even a courageous book. Its author has made clear not only that philosophy has not entirely forsaken the ancient questions but that it can still bring power and illumination to their consideration.

JOHN MACQUARRIE

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY, edited by Johannes B. Bauer. *Sheed and Ward*, London and Sydney, 1970. 3 volumes, 1141 pp. £15.

The original German edition of this work appeared in 1959 and was so widely acclaimed that in less than a decade two much-revised and enlarged editions were published; the English edition is a translation of the third

edition published in 1967. The *Encyclopedia's* 209 articles cover the main themes of Biblical Theology, as well as many less important topics. The work of many of the German, Austrian, Swiss and French Roman Catholic

contributors is already well known—even to non-Catholic scholars in the English-speaking world; a number of them have written substantial monographs on the topics they discuss in this work. The articles are written primarily with the non-specialist in mind and are generally both thorough and clear. The English translation of Bauer's *Encyclopedia* will quickly prove to be a most useful reference work and will be warmly welcomed by many.

Some of the articles are quite outstanding; their authors carry their learning lightly and compress a good deal of information and theological discussion without resorting to loose generalizations. O. Kaiser's article on 'Cult', A. Stöger's on 'Eucharist', P. Bläser's on 'Justification' and R. Schnackenburg's on 'Kingdom of God' are among the most important. The general stance of the writers reflects 'middle-of-the-road' modern Roman Catholic Biblical scholarship; on some peripheral issues traditional interpretations are firmly rejected, but there are few signs of radical questioning of established Roman Catholic positions on topics such as 'Mary' and 'Marriage'.

As is inevitable in a work of this kind, there is a lack of balance at some points: for example, the article on 'Asceticism' is much longer than that on 'Atonement'. But more important differences emerge from the way the contributors understand 'Biblical Theology'. A few articles do little more than list biblical texts under a series of headings, while some grapple very much more vigorously with the text, with critical problems and with the different emphases of various parts of Scripture. Some writers have included historical and linguistic material, while others have written more strictly theological articles. A number of articles discuss papal and conciliar pronouncements, but these, surely, lie outside the domain of Biblical Theology, as does an article on 'Demythologizing' which consists largely of long quotations from R. Bultmann's important essay 'Neues Testament und Mythologie'. 'Biblical Theology' is an expression which is used in almost as many ways as 'eschatology', but if the contributors had worked out precisely what 'Biblical Theology' is, their work would have been more consistent. J. B. Bauer's *Preface* does explore the nature of Biblical Theology, but a much more thorough discussion would have been useful.

The broader question of the relationship of Scripture to tradition is very much bound up

with a definition of 'Biblical Theology'; as a Protestant, I find the comments and implicit assumptions on this question one of the less satisfactory features of the *Encyclopedia*. Contributors often take great pains to distinguish the teaching of Scripture from the teaching of tradition (see, for example, the article on 'Mary'), but I cannot accept that tradition can decide questions which a careful examination of the biblical evidence must leave open. On the whole the exegesis is careful and sober, but occasionally the discussion either involves special pleading (for example on *porneia* in Matt. 19, 9 in the article on 'Marriage'), or has been influenced unduly by tradition (for example, the article on 'Charisma' argues that the Spirit-given gifts can enrich the Church as a blessing only when their bearers submit to the final decision of ecclesiastical authority).

The translators are to be congratulated on completing such a difficult task so quickly. I have not had access to the German edition, but the translation reads well even though there are some stylistic infelicities and some passages seem to have been translated too literally. There are, however, some less satisfactory features of the English translation. The editors have retained the original extremely full bibliographies to each article, though most of the references are to German and French literature. The specialist will find them invaluable, but those who are able to make use of them will find that most of the articles cover very familiar ground. The foreword to the English edition claims that wherever they are available, references to English translations of German (or other foreign) works have been included in the bibliographies. But dozens of widely available translations have been missed and many of those noted are cited inaccurately. The foreword also notes that recent English language titles have been added to some of the bibliographies and are marked with an asterisk; such additions are few and far between and rarely include relevant non-Catholic works. J. B. Bauer has provided a supplementary bibliography for the English edition and this does include much of the recent English language literature, but these references would have been more useful to the reader if they had been included in the bibliographies to the appropriate articles rather than placed towards the end of volume three. Unfortunately there are an enormous number of typographical and other errors in the bibliographies. In A. Vögtle's fine article

on 'Jesus Christ', for example, there are a score of mistakes in the bibliography—R. Bultmann is even listed as the author of O. Cullmann's *Christology*! Volume three includes a most useful analytical index of articles and cross-references, but the 80-page index of biblical references seems to be a work of supererogation! It would have been wiser only to list biblical passages which are discussed in some detail. These weaknesses do not seriously detract from the value of the work and no doubt they will be rectified in a future edition.

Bauer's *Encyclopedia* will certainly encourage biblical preaching and teaching. Its appearance marks yet another landmark in the development of Roman Catholic Biblical scholarship. Protestant readers will appreciate the balanced comments on many disputed topics, but perhaps it is a pity that non-Catholic conclusions on debated topics are not discussed more frequently, for if they had been, the *Encyclopedia* would have been even more widely used by non-Catholic readers than is likely to be the case. GRAHAM N. STANTON

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE (Vol. 1: From the Beginning to Jerome): edited by C. F. Evans; *Cambridge University Press*, 1970, 648 pp. and 25 plates. £4.50 (90s.).

This volume is at once the conclusion and introduction of the series on the history of the Bible from the Cambridge University Press. Since it appears that its successor in that series was conceived without any consideration being given to a preceding volume, there is a considerable amount of overlap between the two; for example, in the articles on textual criticism. Nevertheless this fact does not in any way detract from the excellence of this volume and its contribution to the series as a whole. As the editors themselves point out, consideration of space has demanded selectivity. On this score it is hardly possible to find fault with the list of subjects; although one regrets that Irenaeus could not have been included in the patristic section.

An impressive array of scholars has been invited to contribute articles, and the results in the body of the book on the whole match the promise of the list of contents and contributors. Unfortunately M. Black's article is a disappointing introduction and is no more than a brief description of the various languages with little discussion. One might have expected that the problems of semantics would have received more than the passing reference in the final paragraph.

D. J. Wiseman's essay sets the production of the Old Testament in its literary environment and illuminates issues far beyond the limits which the title might seem to impose. One does regret that in the article on books in the Graeco-Roman world a brief summary was not given of recent investigation into Jewish oral tradition and its importance for New Testament study, even if the title confines the subject-matter more specifically to the written word.

The greater part of the book is devoted to the Bible itself; and here we find some out-

standing contributions. Particularly worthy of mention in the Old Testament section are the articles by P. R. Ackroyd on the formation of the Old Testament, and G. Vermes on Jewish exegesis. The former presents the origin of the Old Testament in a simple way, yet one is conscious at every point of recent methods in Old Testament research. The inclusion of examples of the traditio-historical method is particularly noteworthy. The article demonstrated convincingly the development within the life of the Israelite people and their relationship to the surrounding cultures. But perhaps the best example in the whole volume of scholarly writing allied to simplicity is the article by Vermes. It is to be hoped that the publishers may offer a supplementary volume devoted entirely to the subject of this article. However, one does have reservations about Vermes' unqualified 'working hypothesis': that the haggadah of the Palestinian targums antedates the outbreak of the second Jewish Revolt.

Turning to the section on the New Testament, there is some disappointment that the article on the birth of the New Testament does not match its opposite number in the preceding section. The approach is much more that of the conventional 'einleitung', although, as such, extremely adequate. A better method might have been the assessment of external influences on the formulations, theology, and specific reasons for the writing of the New Testament books. However, one can have nothing but praise for the excellent article by J. N. Birdsall on the New Testament text. His approach epitomizes all that is best in the careful eclecticism that marks the contemporary attitude to the New Testament text. He is, however, surely wrong to describe Codex Argenteus as 'preserved in Stockholm' (p. 369).