

celibacy is a variable ecclesiastical law. In addition, if presbyters in the East are permitted wives, then surely what obtains in one geographical region is permissible in another, namely, the Latin West.

The linchpin in the argument of this book is the conclusion that human love, sexually expressed, is neither an impediment to holiness nor a debilitating hindrance to the effective practice of publicly instituted Christian ministry. At least twelve centuries of Christian life and thought attest to the legitimacy of such a case. With the current drop in the number of clergy, such an argument can only be ignored to the Church's detriment. Or is it a good thing that a Christian cultic priesthood becomes extinct or largely ineffective?

PHILIP KENNEDY OP

LIBERATING ESCHATOLOGY. ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF LETTY M. RUSSELL edited by Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1999. Pp. 261, £20.

This book is a tribute to the Yale theologian, Letty Russell. The introduction by the editors gives a flavour of what is to come in its reference first of all to a meal rather than writing as one of the peculiar contributions of a much-loved and respected theologian.

The book is divided into four parts. Three introductory essays by J.Shannon Clarkson, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Shawn Copeland consider the distinctive characteristics of the theology and praxis of Letty Russell. Part 2 (taking up the importance of the table as a site of theology) includes an evocative essay by Phyllis Trible on the bible in the round; Katharine Sakenfeld on Ruth 4; Elsa Tamez on Ezekiel 47 and dreaming from exile; Katie Cannon on Hurston's account of the Ruby McCollum trial; James Cone on Martin's dream or Malcolm's nightmare; and Mercy Oduyoye in a searingly personal study on the childless woman in West Africa which persistently questions cultural stereotypes in her own and every society. Part 3 is entitled liberating theology: the work of the table. It includes essays by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza on the Jesus movement as a *basileia* movement, Kwok Pui-Lan on women, nature and eschatological hope, and Beverly Harrison on feminist theologies at the Millennium. Part 4 focuses more on eschatology, with Sharon Ringe writing on the Spirit and the Church in the Fourth Gospel, Jürgen Moltmann on the theme of liberating and anticipating the future, Joan Martin on womanist eschatology and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz on Mujerista narratives.

There are interesting reflections in plenty among the various essays contained in this volume, much of which relates to the subject of eschatology and its importance for Christian theology and the liberating character of the Christian gospel. What is most striking about this collection is the character and contribution of Letty Russell who is honoured by the various essays. Two things in particular are striking about what is found here. First of all, there is the sense of an enthusiasm for the subject which is communicated as much by a way of life in celebration and conversation as by high-powered writing and argument. Secondly, in a world where theological superstars are respected and international

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 96