see that God's demise evacuates humanity of its traditional meaning. Nietzsche 'demands to be heard' and Henry's account of his thought—'inescapably religious' and 'tormentedly close' to Christianity—is very moving. Nietzsche rejects the possibility of hope and rejoices in whatever happens. His affirmation of the world must include an endorsement of what Christian faith calls 'evil' and yet he continues to operate with the tacit assumption of a good God. Like Hegel he lacks a doctrine of grace so that from a Christian point of view there is no appreciable difference between the atheism of the one and the pantheism of the other. For Christianity, on the other hand, the transcendence of God means that the worth of life in this world is established from beyond this world and that Jesus' victory, far from being the humiliation of humanity which Nietzsche feared, is its affirmation and redemption.

Henry adds a useful account of postmodernism which emerges with the collapse of modernity's convictions about progress, rationality and the autonomous self. No self or system provides a secure foundation for any final meaning or truth about the human condition. Henry shows how postmodernism illuminates aspects of the theology of creation (pp. 281–82, 307) so that postmodernism too belongs intrinsically (albeit parasitically) to Judaeo-Christianity. Why regard the world without God as meaningless? If there is no God, there is no 'evil', only Nietzsche's 'innocence of becoming'. Henry admits that the problem of evil remains an embarrassment for theistic belief and faced with its reality Christianity has no intellectual message to offer. The moral argument for the existence of God is at best inconclusive, he argues, and at worst double-edged.

Henry's concern is intellectual and pastoral, recognising that there are intellectual aspects to the fact that belief in Christianity's God has become elusive or has faded altogether for many people, anxious at the same time that intellectual concern with religious questions not replace religious practice. There are traces throughout of humour and scepticism, an echo in the author's thinking of his belief in God's 'unavailability'. Christianity's healthy agnosticism should help it not only to remain intellectually modest but to distance itself from the more belligerent forms of modern religion, absence or darkness being potent signs of the presence of the true God.

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

THE RELIGION OF BEING, by Don Cupitt (London: *SCM,* 1998). viii + 181pp. £9.95 paper.

It is somewhat inevitable that a book entitled *The Religion of Being* will have something to do with Heidegger. Don Cupitt's latest addition to his ever growing corpus certainly fulfils that expectation, albeit in a rather loose sort of way. Heideggerian scholars will no doubt complain that a 'religion of Being' would have been anathema to Heidegger, and that Cupitt's reading is highly selective and creative.

Such charges are by no means unfamiliar, since Cupitt has frequently been said to have 'misread' many of the great philosophers. It might be said, however, that to accuse Cupitt of 'misreading' these past masters

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028428900021958 Published online by Cambridge University Press

itself betrays a 'misreading' of Cupitt on the part of the accuser. For Cupitt has long made a distinction between scholarly and creative philosophers, and he has never claimed to be one of the former. He has not been interested in scholarly and accurate expositions of the thoughts of his philosophical predecessors. Rather, he has used their thoughts selectively and often deliberately distortedly to assist him in his artistic task of creating philosophy. In *The Last Philosophy* (1995, p. 134), he said that his work 'has nothing to do with scholarship: it is about the mysterious and rather Jungian business of an evolving personal mythology.'

So the inevitable carping that, in this book, Cupitt has misinterpreted Heidegger is essentially superfluous. Of course he has, and that is the point. By now, Cupitt knows his critics only too well. So well, in fact, that he is able to reply to them before they have even addressed him. Thus, he insists that this book is not an 'academic' study of Heidegger, and that the ideas it contains are his own rather than Heidegger's (p. 9). Again, he says 'I am not concerned to be faithful to Heidegger, and this present essay might best be seen as a reworking or revision of some of his themes and ideas, written half-a-century later and in very different times. But it is a deviant reading.' (p. 13). So rather than asking how Cupitt's conception of 'Being' compares with some Platonic ideal of what Heidegger actually means by 'Being', a far more fruitful question would be to ask what Cupitt himself means by the term. He says that it is 'pure flowing, outpouring temporal contingency. It is the well-spring, the Fountain. It is Be(com)ing, a coinage I use by way of pointing back to a place before the arising of the distinction between Being and Becoming. Being as Be(com)ing can't be thought, but it can be surfed in meditation. You should learn to surf it.' (p. 18).

So to what extent does this represent a development in Cupitt's thought? He has always maintained that each new book arises out of a subsequently perceived deficiency in the previous one. In this instance, however, the deficiency cannot have been great, for this book represents one of the more subtle shifts in Cupitt's philosophical outlook, even if initially, it might appear as a radical retraction. For the most part, he builds on the philosophical (non-)foundations laid down in *After All* (1994) and *The Last Philosophy* (1995). Furthermore, his concept of 'Being' is one that has been developed before, and expressed by images such as the Fountain. However, the subtle development that justifies this new book is succinctly encapsulated on p. 82: 'Circularly, being and meaning continually sustain each other, just in time.' In case we miss it, he explains in a footnote that in *After All* and *The Last Philosophy*, he set up this circularity without remainder. Now, however, he adds 'just in time' to make the point that there is something prior to this circularity, and something which it presupposes. So whereas he has previously said that there is nothing outside, prior to or presupposed by language, he now says that 'language does presuppose something. It presupposes Being. But Being under erasure, is not a proper word, not part of language and not clearly describable in language.' (p. 88).

Therefore, the thesis of this book might initially appear to be a quite

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radical retraction of all that has gone before, for it maintains that there is something other than language, after all. But again, Cupitt has anticipated his critics. He says that there is nothing particularly radical about the development in this book, neither is it a retraction. He simply felt that he had become too locked into his own terminology, and that some 'craftily-chosen' Heideggerian vocabulary might help to free himself from such entrapment. Thus, Cupitt regards this new book as 'a clarifying restatement of the position that was earlier set out in *The Time Being* (1992) and *The Last Philosophy* (1992).' (p. 154). It is therefore a piece of 'fine tuning', making explicit what had previously been implicit, and enabling him to come to a 'partial synthesis or inconclusion.'

Are there any criticisms that Cupitt has *not* anticipated in this book? No doubt, there are several, but I shall raise just one here. This is that Cupitt neglects the distinctively theological interpretations of Heidegger's thought that have been developed in recent years. For instance, Fergus Kerr has argued that Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics was the overcoming of non-realism, as well as of realism; they are the two opposite extremes of the same metaphysical error. The overcoming of both gives rise to the 'clearing', which Kerr interprets as a space in which theology can be itself. So whereas Cupitt wants to understand 'Being' in terms of non-realism, Kerr wants to understand 'Being' as that to which one turns after one has overcome, or turned away from, both realism and non-realism. This is an important challenge that Cupitt might usefully have discussed. Instead and familiarly, most of his attacks centre upon Platonic metaphysical realism, but as Kerr and others suggest, it is no longer clear that this represents the most serious and important challenge to Cupitt's thought.

Another way in which this book is distinguished from previous ones is that it ends with an 'Inconclusion' that is remarkably conclusive. In this fascinating and uncharacteristically personal account, Cupitt provides a retrospective analysis of his life-long philosophical project. He says: Now at last a long series of experiments in religious thought and writing seems to be reaching a sort of resolution and a paradoxical in-conclusion in the religion of Being.' (p. 152) Although this sounds conclusively final, Cupitt has always resisted all forms of finality. One suspects that it will not be too long before another deficiency is identified, and consequently, that this book will be followed by yet another. One also suspects that if and when this happens, we shall once again be grateful for it.

GAVIN HYMAN

WALES AND THE REFORMATION by Glanmor Williams, Cardiff: *University of Wales Press*, **1997. xii + 440 pp. £25.00.**

This book, as the author explains in the preface, is a long-delayed sequel to his highly acclaimed *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1962). It is a full-length account of the history of the Reformation in Wales from the reign of Henry VIII to the end of the reign of Elizabeth, and as such is the first work of its kind, a remarkable fact in view of the profound and far-reaching consequences of the Reformation for Wales.

If the Reformation was generally resented in England, it was probably

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