

The Fathers erred in good faith, fully believing that it was important to safeguard Jesus' humanity, 'but their expression of what is meant for Jesus to be human, even at its best, is hopelessly unsatisfactory for us' (ibid.); *inter alia*, they 'ignore what for us is a *sine qua non* of personal existence, namely, the nexus of biological, historical and social relationships with our fellow-men and with the universe as a whole. If that is not there, then Jesus may have entered completely into the place where we are—but only as a visitor . . . No one can just *become* a man out of the blue: a genuine man, as opposed to a replica, can only come out of the process, not into it' (pp. 41; 43). Many will be glad to follow the bishop at least for quite a way along this path, readily agreeing that even Aquinas presents a Jesus who is 'extraordinarily unreal', and that Christology today should start with the humanity of Jesus and proceed from the known to the unknown. In one of the half-dozen striking passages quoted from his works in this book, Luther says: 'the philosophers and doctors have insisted on beginning from above, and so have become fools. We must begin from below, and after that come upwards'.

In affirming the substantial historicity of the Gospel accounts, even John's, Dr Robinson shows that he is not devoid of the independence of mind which dares to snap its fingers at the *Zeitgeist*. Would that he did so more frequently! Too often, alas, from the elevation of a fashionable bandwagon he pours ridicule, unmingled with reasoned refutations, upon allegedly outworn notions. Myself, I resent his attempts thus to hustle me into agreeing that ontological or absolute modes of thought are untenable (e.g. 'Christ may be a centre, or even *the* centre for me, but to say that he is *the* centre absolutely seems as naive today as thinking of Delphi as the centre of the world', p. 24); or that the only reality is the mundane (e.g. 'mythical or metaphysical "events" are ways of speaking, and to us fairly strange ways of speaking, about the profoundest realities of *this* historical order. The real world—"where we are down here"—is the starting point: the rest is interpretation, in terms of the imagination or the intellect', p. 32); or that the belief that God can be

directly present to the religious consciousness is 'naive'. To characterise views as naive, a disturbingly common ploy in this book, is a poor substitute for rational disproof.

It is not clear to me that in order to commend the approaches he favours Dr Robinson needs to dispose, by whatever means, of older approaches. May we not, for instance, emphasise the importance of the this-worldly without assuming that other-worldly talk is chimerical? May we not stress the social and political dimensions of the Gospel without denying the value of millenia of 'vertical' religious experiences? 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone'.

The bare bones of Robinson's Christology are as follows. Jesus was not the incarnation of a pre-existent divine person. The Logos which was from eternity was, as he quotes the Catholic Schoonenberg as saying, *anhypostatic*. Jesus was a fully human being conceived and born in the usual way (not by virgin birth; but of Mary and an unknown man: 'we shall never know humanly speaking who was Jesus' father'). 'Jesus' and 'the Christ' are not co-terminous: rather, as the Kingdom 'subsists' in the Church, so the Christ 'subsisted' in Jesus. That Jesus was perfect, sinless, ever-loving, we have not the evidence to say positively, but we can say that pure, unbounded love *is* revealed in the Christ. Jesus 'is but the clue, the parable, the sign by whom it is possible to recognise the Christ in others' (p. 239). Jesus 'lived God', he so responded to God that we can use God-language of him as well as man-language. But to say of him that he is God, or 'God for us' at least, is not to *add* anything to his humanity.

This is an uneven but important book, which must be taken seriously. In my view, Dr Robinson has, particularly in his discussion of pre-existence and virgin-birth, where his argumentation is detailed and based upon the careful exegesis of the NT at which he is adept, given us much to chew upon. On the other hand, an important part of his thesis, namely the distinction between Jesus and the Christ, which is never adequately explained even, appears to have no Biblical basis and to be gratuitous and thoroughly unsatisfactory.

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HEGEL, by Raymond Plant. *George Allen and Unwin Ltd.* London 1973. 214 pp. £3.75

The aim of this book is 'to show that Hegel's mature philosophical position can be greatly illuminated by considering his own acknowledged failure to solve the problems in both personal and social experience which he diagnosed in his early writings' (p. 16). This aim, with its consequent chronological approach to Hegel's mature philosophical systems, is pur-

sued in conscious opposition to Professor Findlay's assertion (quoted by Dr. Plant) that 'the great interest in [Hegel's] *Juvenilia* stems in part from an unwillingness to scale the main crags of his system: men linger in the foothills because they resemble the lower-lying territories in which they feel best able to work and think'. It should be said at once

that Dr. Plant by no means 'lingers in the foothills'. Nonetheless, Professor Findlay's insight here is basically sound. Raymond Plant's approach has two main drawbacks. The first is the temptation (not always successfully resisted) not so much to explain Hegel's philosophy as to explain it away. The other is that it leads him to concentrate on the metaphysical and religious elements in Hegel's thought at the expense of the theoretical. What is needed is an appreciation of Hegel as a theoretician doing philosophy in the medium of categories and, in so doing, producing an acceptable defence of concepts in ontology and other philosophical fields. Such an account leads to the need to explain Hegel's philosophical system not in terms of his personal history but by reference to the logical development of an all-inclusive theory of determinacy. We would then find Hegel using the cumulative evidence of philosophical tradition, certain findings of the sciences, and the results of his own philosophical investigations to arrive at a rationalized scheme accounting for determinacy. This scheme could then be appraised, as Dr. Plant notes that Hegel himself wished it to be appraised, in terms of its explanatory power. But if we accept a centrally metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, such as that provided by the present book, such an appraisal is, Dr. Plant believes, impossible. The result is to sell short the very philosophy which the book sets out to illuminate.

This book is the first in a series entitled *Political Thinkers*. Appropriately the author devotes some space to Hegel's specifically political views. Here Dr. Plant is very good indeed. These views, like the book as a whole, are well researched and should refute once and for all the fiction of Hegel as an essentially totalitarian thinker. It is true that Hegel insisted upon the necessity of state regulation of commercial society, seeing that in such a society, with its progressive division of labour, 'the faculties of the individual are restricted and the consciousness of (the factory worker) is degraded to the lowest level of dullness' (*Realphilosophie* I: quoted p. 113). The poor position of the factory worker within the commercial system, fragmented, and with his human powers not fully utilized, cries out for some degree of state regulation of the economy. In this, as the author points out, Hegel seems clearly to have been influenced by the writings of that 'somewhat maverick figure of the Scottish enlightenment', Sir Joseph Steuart. But whereas Steuart was concerned only with the state regulation of com-

mercial activity, Hegel showed an equal concern about the character of such a state, insisting that it must be such as to provide some means of participation to the individual. Control of commercial relationships and efficient administration were not, that is, to be the only criteria of good government. Hegel's account, says Dr. Plant, seems to be one in which he is 'trying to steer a *via media* between non-intervention in the economic life of the community . . . and too much intervention' (p. 116). What Dr. Plant, given his basic approach, cannot meaningfully ask, and what must be asked of Hegel's social philosophy, is whether his totality view is given at the expense of losing sight of the concrete social interrelationship between different entities in the whole, i.e., whether a problem like the precise amount of state intervention can be solved within a philosophy using categories. A discussion of this issue remains outstanding.

Although I believe Dr. Plant to be mistaken in seeing in Hegel's early work a key to the identity of his later philosophy, his account of the early theological writings, brief though it is, holds considerable interest. He presents a convincing alternative to the fashionable view that 'Das Leben Jesu' is merely an attempt to depict Jesus as a mouth-piece for certain Kantian positions. He argues that this work should be seen in terms of the requirements for a folk religion, the hope being that through his reinterpretation of the message of Jesus a folk religion might be developed out of Christianity. All this is interesting and well argued, but the relevance of this to Hegel's mature philosophical position on God and religion, where he offers as the categorial account of these a unity of spirit which is absolute, is by no means obvious.

Despite serious reservations, it should be said that this book presents a balanced and sane approach to Hegel's philosophy. For those, and there are many such, whose only approach to Hegel has been a reading of the over-publicised *Open Society and its Enemies*, a book to which Dr. Plant rightly refuses to give serious consideration, a study of this volume should be mandatory. It refutes, hopefully once and for all, the slanderous caricature of Hegel which, in the name of liberalism, the wild excesses and wilful misinterpretations of Popper's book has done so much to propagate. If it did no more, this alone would make Dr. Plant's book a welcome addition to existing Hegel studies. While not the preferred entrance to Hegel's system, it merits a wide, if cautious, reading. I hope it will get it.

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