

Southern Africa appears to have influenced the very way he does theology. Midway through the text there appears the following statement which might, I suggest, serve as the fundamental hermeneutical principle for this way of making theology: "...while we can and must make the distinction between cultural norms and theological ones, we can never *separate* the two, because we cannot separate people from their culture...and we should not try". (p. 158) Assuming this suggestion is correct, several questions regarding method and its implication need to be asked. For example, Father Hill's discussion of polygamy in the African cultures—or his remarks on the military mystique of past Viking cultures—appears to lack a criterion for distinguishing what should be absorbed from a culture and incorporated into the local church and what ought to be questioned and probably not appropriated. A tricky issue, to be sure. Nonetheless, in discussing the relation of culture to theology, I suggest that a tighter principle of selection is needed. Of course, this is much to ask from an introductory textbook; however I detected some unclarity in the discussions regarding the assimilation of the mores of a culture into the practices of a local church. The argument just isn't clear. On the other hand the insights from non-western cultures provide a unique strength for the book, separating it from so much text-book writing totally dependent upon western history and culture. A good example here is Father Hill's fascinating analysis of the concept of community. This book would serve a beginning college class well. Also it would be quite good for adult continuing education projects at the parish or local institution level. To assist the reader, Father Hill has included an analytical table of contents, a rather thorough general index and indices to texts used both from scripture and the *Summa Theologiae*.

While some sections of the text might have benefited from an editor with a full fountain pen, nonetheless the novice reader in theology and the person more experienced in these matters can learn much from this book. It does engage the reader. It satisfies the criterion of the series to work from fresh guidelines. It is a good text from which to challenge young minds to think more clearly and critically about the nature of the process of developing one's humanity in the Christian tradition and the central role of becoming human in that tradition. And that project is certainly pressing as the twentieth century nears its last decade.

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MODERN THEOLOGY Volume 1 N° 1 October 1984. *Basil Blackwell Oxford*.
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That a space is open for a journal that would concentrate on the period from the Reformation onwards is the gamble that *Modern Theology* is taking. The field has more runners than one might at first suppose. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, the 'heaviest' as well as the most venerable one on the scene, maintains a high standard of critical reviews of the literature on the period in question. *The Scottish Journal of Theology* and *The Heythrop Journal*, although distinctively 'confessional' in origin, and to some extent still in practice, often publish exactly the sort of articles that *Modern Theology* will now attract—but neither of them is exclusively 'modern'. The bias of *Religious Studies* is towards philosophical theology and natural religion. *Theology* and *The Clergy Review*, while consistently offering much worthwhile theology, scholarly as well as speculative, necessarily appeal predominantly to Anglican and Catholic readerships respectively. *The Downside Review* maintains the Benedictine tradition of hospitality to all comers. The other journals become increasingly specialised: *One in Christ*, *Sobornost*, *The Expository Times*... Not to mention the journals devoted to biblical studies and ecclesiastical history. If the state of theology may be judged by the number of flourishing 'little magazines' (as literary people would say), then we are surely in a modest ferment.

In fact, despite the cutback in staff and resources, more people than ever want to

study theology and allied subjects at university level. Perhaps it is because the millennium is approaching, but people do seem to be arguing more intensely about matters theological. Gerald Priestland's radio series, and, even more, Don Cupitt's television one, must both reflect and prompt this interest. Bishops with more evident social conscience than Tory politicians may even suggest to people that theology has some relevance after all. For those, and other obvious reasons, the climate may very well be favourable for a journal that explicitly starts with the problems created by the Reformation and the Enlightenment.

It is a special pleasure to find old friends in the first issue of the new journal. Indeed, the editor himself, Kenneth Surin, will be remembered for his remarkable, and profoundly theological, study of *Sophie's Choice*—the novel, rather than the film (*New Blackfriars*, July/August 1983). Theological journals, at this level, are not like newspapers. No one should expect to understand every article at first go. Future issues—the journal is to be quarterly—will carry 'critical studies of books'; but, for the moment, *Modern Theology* has started promisingly.

FERGUS KERR OP

FREE IN CHRIST. An introduction to Political Theology, by Paul Lakeland.
Kevin Mayhew Publishers, Leigh on Sea. 1984. £3.00.

Suppose I say 'This is a good introduction to political theology': what would readers of this review expect to find? They might be disappointed if they were looking for a bluffer's guide to the big names in liberation theology with some short and lucid synopses of what they are saying. (As it happens there is enough bibliography on Latin America, other Third World and European political theology to lead the bluffer further, but it is not the point of the book). They would feel more rewarded if they wanted an initiation into the business of *doing* theology the way liberation theologians think it should be done. If someone has read the book carefully they may well find that their understanding of the scope and method of theology has changed; there are challenging treatments of the relation between theology and politics, the bible and the contemporary world, faith and ideology, openness and bias. (On this last point, while Paul Lakeland rightly insists that Christian commitment cannot be simply collapsed into any other sort of commitment, and while he stresses that our motivation has to be indignation and our bias has to be to the marginalised, he seems to be too even-handed in his approach to the capitalist/socialist option).

Since the book is written for a mainly British and North American readership (and perhaps Irish too, though not so you would notice), it is a pity that it does not pay more attention to topics such as militarism, nuclear weapons, ecology, the evils of the nation-state, etc., etc. — not in the sense of giving a systematic treatment of each of them, but of indicating that they have to be part of the agenda. And since the book has a Catholic publisher it is a pity that the major scandal of the Church's sexism is not confronted. (Women do at least rate the second half of the book's penultimate sentence; and it is good to report that the language is carefully non-sexist).

As an act of communication this book could be bettered; Paul Lakeland is an experienced journalist, and the fact that his language is not always accessible is a reflection of the less than lucid way political theologians tend to express themselves. (Odd, because liberation theology is, surely, about giving people access to language as a means of possessing their world).

Nevertheless, the book is not only a challenging introduction but a useful contribution to the debate, and will I hope stimulate creative theological thinking in many places.

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