

passage of the discussion of the critical problem, p. 88). But I would maintain that, since the publication of these articles, it is irresponsible to affirm that 'such and such was Aquinas's position' on matters of cognitional theory or trinitarian psychology, without taking them into account. As Lonergan himself says, his own inductively reached conclusions can only be overthrown, so far as their validity as Thomist exegesis is concerned, by an equally exhaustive inductive process (cf. pp. 180-1). So far as the philosophical problems are concerned, readers of *Insight* or *Collection* will already be familiar with many of these conclusions: 'Evidently the Aristotelian and Thomist programme is not a matter of considering ocular vision and then conceiving an analogous spiritual vision that is attributed to a spiritual faculty named intellect' (p. 76). While psychology and metaphysics are kept carefully distinct, there is the familiar insistence that certain philosophical confusions are due to the activity of 'interpreters unaware of the relevant psychological facts' (p. xiv).

But, however interesting and important the philosophical discussion that occupies the greater part of the book, it is a theological problem, 'the *imago Dei*, which is the central issue both in Aquinas' thought on *verbum* and, as well, in our inquiry' (p. 183). I am (perhaps unfashionably) convinced that a principal factor making for sterility in contemporary

God-talk is the fact that the 'God' for whom 'models' are sought (is he 'up there', 'in here', or the 'ground of being'?) is rather infrequently the Trinity of Christian confession. And one of the reasons for this is perhaps that the popular 'models' of the Trinity, while frequently claiming to use the 'psychological analogy', are often little more than a simplified version of the uncomprehending twaddle that is talked by the experts. '. . . in prevalent theological opinion there is as good an analogy to the procession of the Word in human imagination as in human intellect, while the analogy to the procession of the Holy Spirit is wrapped in deepest obscurity' (p. 183). Many people who have found that the doctrine of the Trinity, as presented to them, simply does not connect with *anything*, may be stimulated by this essay to capture something of the simplicity, profundity and brilliance of Aquinas's conception of the *imago Dei* (cf. p. xiv). (But, here again, a less painful route to the same goal would be Fr Lonergan's own *Divinarum Personarum Conceptio Analogica*.) The psychological analogy, as sketched by Augustine, and simplified and clarified by Aquinas, is only one of many possible models to help our thinking about the God of Christian revelation. A glance at contemporary theological writing, however, does not suggest that it has yet been improved upon.

NICHOLAS LASH

THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF ATONEMENT, by F. W. Dillistone. *James Nisbet*, London, 1968. 436 pp. 42s.

This book is a practical demonstration of the value to theology when the range of theological sensibility is deliberately widened to become receptive to the parallel but distinct discipline of literary criticism. When a sensibility so widened is applied to a well-worn theme—the atonement—we are at once rewarded with a new method and starting points. Although the word 'atonement' is now not much used, its related term 'alienation' has become a cliché; but if we re-interpret the traditional doctrine in terms of establishing a new wholeness or self-reconciliation are we merely exploiting it? Only if we see the atonement as a mere doctrine instead of what it is—an event which demands interpretation. Already set within the framework of a theory, it was inevitably destined to have profound social consequences; and it has always to be understood within what Dr Dillistone calls 'ranges of comparison'. There

can be no one definitive interpretation, only a series of collisions between an absolute claim and our dilemmas and explanations. These, if we are lucky, will 'fall, gall themselves and gash gold-vermilion' with the brief light of a successful interpretation.

Dr Dillistone's method is to approach this compound of fact and interpretation by means of a developing series of analogues and parables, beginning with the pre-Christian analogue of universal regeneration through a central cosmic sacrifice. But so systematic and wide-ranging an account of our estrangement and reconciliation depends upon its origins in a pre-scientific world-view; and there are other conceptions of atonement which may also depend upon such foundations of cosmic self-confidence—the juridical or penal parable of the decisive judgment, and the parable of the unique redemption wrought by the single and

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decisive battle. Our experience of war, however, is of attrition; and modern theologians are rightly suspicious of a dualistic account of cosmic order (even Milton had trouble with it in *Paradise Lost*). Yet the strength of Dr Dillistone's approach is his acceptance of the apparent paradox that in spite of their theoretical shortcomings such analogues and parables will remain potent facts of the imagination. Even when they become less available to us than to older generations, we must still pass through them into our own range of comparison, and allow it to be corrected by them. We can continue to respond to Christ as the tragic hero provided we realize that this comparison is no more final than that of Christus Victor: if the latter implies a dualism which is finally unacceptable, the former can make of Christ's ultimate reconciliation nothing more than a paradox, in which our understanding though concentrated is confined within the moment of tragic catharsis. Yet to say that there must be more to the atonement than tragedy or victory is not to repudiate such ranges of comparison; instead we must accept their correction and grow through them, personally and historically, to interpretations which fit our circumstances more exactly.

The turning point for Dr Dillistone is the nineteenth century. Its theologians—Schleiermacher, Maurice and, in particular, R. C. Moberly—are the first to conceive atonement in terms of the personal relationships of *adult* family life. The voluntary endurance of the mother as she shares with the father the shame and distress of the child, neither enforcing nor condoning, but suffering the 'wise diplomacy of love'—here is a range of comparison which comes at once alive, as does its implication that Christ's sacrifice is no after-thought, invented to meet an unfortunate situation, but belongs to and is wrought within the very life of God himself. 'Man is challenged to participate in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world.' 'The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us.' He whose life on earth was devoted essentially to forms of reconciling activity dies in lonely and therefore tragic agony upon the Cross; but this act, 'within the will and gift of God', is 'the means by which the new community, the Church, was to be brought into existence and a real fellowship between man and God was to be restored'.

How this activity can be part of the living God is, in the strict sense, 'unthinkable', and the claim cannot be expressed, therefore, other

than in language which appears paradoxical to the point of contradiction; but our faith is that such contradiction is linguistic rather than actual. The event being one which demands interpretation, and our standpoint one which perpetually changes, we experience a continual dialectic between authentication and conviction: the former belongs to scripture and theology, the latter to literature; the former asks of an interpretation if it is true, the latter if it is convincing. But directly we allow our theological interpretations to be brought under the judgment of literature, we realize the extent to which one language has a higher breaking-point than the other: all religious statements claim to authenticate, but literary ones do not always succeed in convincing and may more frequently merely suspend our disbelief. Just how fragile a process literary realization is can be seen if we take two examples from this book and ask if they are, in fact, of equal power to convince.

The first, from Eliot's *East Coker*, is of the hospital 'endowed by the ruined millionaire', in which 'The wounded surgeon plies the steel That questions the distempered part.' The theological references here have always seemed too explicit to be convincing, and the paradoxes or 'conceits' too obviously contrived. In the companion poem, *The Killing* by Edwin Muir, we notice what is gained by a more limited ambition and range of theological reference: with an unlaboured immediacy the words convey what we might feel *now* if we had

stayed throughout the Crucifixion when, at the end, 'all grew stale at last,
Spite, curiosity, envy, hate itself.
They waited only for death and death was slow
And came so quietly they scarce could mark it.
They were angry then with death and death's deceit.

Muir's question is limited, but its limitation shapes our conviction by determining that area precisely which actively engages us *now*:

'Did a God

Indeed in dying cross my life that day

By chance, he on his road and I on mine?'

It is only as the poet with a subtle accuracy enables us to feel how our self-estrangement collides or 'crosses' with this historical event that we are prepared to entertain its interpretation: authentication must wait upon conviction. To act otherwise is a dangerous business, as we Catholics know better than most Christians; and the book is at its best where this sense of danger is at its strongest. After the monotony of post-encyclical Catholic writing it is like coming across a spring in the desert and if proof were still needed of what English Catholic theologians might gain from entering into the life and concerns of our universities Dr Dillistone provides it in abundance. The originality of his book consists as much in the kind of sensibility which, in recommending it reveals, as in the depth of scholarship by which it is sustained.

JOHN COULSON

BEFORE THE DELUGE, by Sebastian Moore, O.S.B. and Anselm Hurt, O.S.B. *Chapman*, London 1968. Deacon Books. 124 pp. 10s. 6d.

It used to be said, in a district of mixed religion, 'You can always tell the Catholics—they look so cowed'. Dom Sebastian Moore is a cure for such lay Catholics and their priests. For instance: 'Let us courageously apply the following test to all that we have been taught to believe: if it makes us fearful and doubtful of ourselves, if it makes us small and timid, then it is not of Christ.' A convert reviewer may be at a disadvantage ('You can always tell the Protestants—they look so smug'). She cannot always accept the sweeping generalizations, of which there are many, about the pusillanimity of Christians up to now. For instance the phrase, 'Who takest away the sins of the world' does not make her feel sad and guilty, but immensely grateful. Never mind. It is what Dom Sebastian has to say that matters. 'God loves us, which is that God finds each of us a

fascinating and exciting person. And God's taste is excellent.' And 'To forgive sin is to give the sinner hope. It is to make it possible for him to thaw out. It is to say to him: "Life awaits you again, you are accepted... there's something you can do that no one else can do".' Dom Sebastian writes with refreshing insight about our falsities in the confessional; the confessing of something 'just in case', the childish conceit of sin as bad behaviour according to the rules and the habitual reference to 'a kind of standard Catholic soul'. A great deal of what he writes reminds us of the occasion when God told Ezekiel to stop grovelling and stand upon his feet. And still more vividly and repeatedly he describes Ezekiel's 'heart of flesh' in place of the 'heart of stone'; the love of God and neighbour as the one life of a Christian, without any conflict being possible between the two