

**METAPHOR AND MODERNIST. THE POLARISATION OF ALFRED LOISY AND HIS NEO-THOMIST CRITICS** by C.J.T. Talar, *University Press of America, 1988. Pp 194. \$19.50.*

On his confiding to the Spiritual Director of the seminary that the intellectual analysis of Christian belief being offered by the scholastic professors was making him more unsettled and questioning, the young Loisy was told that an account which had satisfied Thomas Aquinas should satisfy him. There was no encouragement to question whether the seminary teaching was faithful to Aquinas. Loisy was, therefore, left to wonder if the great saint might not have phrased things differently in a nineteenth century context. But this at once declared itself to be a useless speculation, and, being a good chap, Loisy determined to distract himself from such thoughts by teaching himself Hebrew. If this provided a short-term refuge, the longer effect was, as Dr Talar indicates, 'to raise questions of even greater consequence, regarding adherence to scholastic orthodoxy'.

Questions about 'the right words' were not long coming. By 1886 Loisy was noting that 'the literal sense of the theological formulas becomes constantly less credible', whilst in 1902 Cardinal Perraud was worrying that *L'Evangile et l'Eglise* presented theses that 'border on double meaning' and were accompanied by some insidious uses of 'perhaps'. Thus Dr Talar is prompted to study the linguistic character of the 'modernist crisis'. And nothing distracts Dr Talar from the job in hand. Very little is provided here of biographical information or of the general argument Loisy was conducting in the Church. Not every reader now will recognise, as the greater number of the subscribers to *Revue du clergé français* in 1898 will have recognised, that the pseudonym 'A. Firmin' attached to articles which precipitated the crisis derived from Loisy's forenames. It is Loisy's language which is Dr Talar's constant topic.

Dr Talar goes very carefully. Almost ploddingly. At each stage of the discussion a bow is made to some modern theorist, then a description is offered of that theorist's particular language work, specifying the element to be adapted for Dr Talar's present purpose, then an indication of the use that can be made of that element in clarifying the modernist debate, and then a looking-round for the next helpful steward to direct the process of Dr Talar's argument. Thus we are moved from individual word to idiosyncratic metaphor, thence to the polysemic results of sentence-making, and last to the structures of narrative.

Dr Talar begins by adducing Kuhn's analysis of scientific history in terms of 'revolutions' to demonstrate the 'incommensurability' of 19th century scholasticism and modernist ways of talking. Kuhn's own insistence that his framework could not be useful to the theological historian requires some excuse for this adduction. And some readers may judge that they did not need Kuhn's help before recognising that the conversations between the established clergy and the new critics were 'inevitably limited by the imperfections of the process of translation and of reference determination'. Even Dr Talar finds it more appropriate to summarise this chapter in a sentence of Blondel: 'today there are two intellectual worlds present, which while they use the same words, do not speak the same language and remain incomprehensible to each other'. From here Dr Talar points us where Max

Black's 'interaction view' of metaphor would have us go. Loisy's Newmanic emphasis on our appreciating revealed religion as 'a life, an active organism, a fruitful institution' is now to be interpreted as exemplifying Black's thesis about 'focus' and 'frame'. Next, Paul Ricoeur is enlisted to show that Loisy's expression of the Church as the root of a tree whose top is the Kingdom, and his attendant talk of 'acorn' and 'budding' and 'growth' is all absurd literally but makes metaphoric sense. Only when assured by such scientific backing does Dr Talar feel ready to consider the polysemy of 'life' in Loisy's writing. None of the curiosities of 'nature' metaphors discussed by Polixenes and Perdita is given place in Dr Talar's meditation. Only certain sorts of language expert count. Shakespeare is not one of them. From the 'tensive metaphor' in Loisy's sentences, Dr Talar would have us assist at the kind of hermeneutical exploration of narrative suggested by Hayden White.

Before we can investigate *L'Evangile et l'Eglise* however, we must be made aware that White's thought has been characterised as 'close to a genetic structuralism' and so 'some clarification of its roots in structural linguistics will likely prove helpful'. So far as these things are clear to me, White is proffering something akin to the old tag: *quidquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur*; the relationships between events are understood by historians in ways which confirm the propriety of the kind of narrative they have already in mind. Dr Talar, having identified Loisy's 'tropological prefiguration' as synecdochal, and having accepted White's proposal that the 'methodological projection' of synecdoche is 'that Organicism which modern historians of historical thought have identified as Historicism', feels warranted to assure us that 'Loisy's organismic metaphors have the effect of strongly embedding historical personages, ideas and events in their environment'. We should now see how it is that Loisy should be the one to declare that 'orthodoxy is only unchangeable in the imagination of those who believe it to be so'. Dr Talar says nothing of this very sentence's anticipating the work of Hayden White. Rather, to prove 'relevance', Dr Talar makes quick nods to *Humani Generis* and *Dei Verbum*, so that at the close I am not much the wiser about what I was doing when I signed the anti-modernist oath. I was better served by the old priest who instructed me to take all such things *cum grano salis*.

Some readers will grumble at Dr Talar's own linguistic uses; talk of a learned Jesuit's 'input to Cardinal Richard' and a reference to *Pascendi Domenici Gregis* seems reproachable. But everything, even the abuse of a verb as a noun, must be forgiven the thesis-writer who admits 'I am unable to retrieve the source of this quote from my notes'.

HAMISH F.G. SWANSTON

**FAITH AFTER FOUNDATIONALISM** by D.Z. Phillips. *Routledge*, London 1988. Pp. xviii + 341. £40.

In the first part of this book Phillips is concerned with the philosophical doctrine known as foundationalism. This is the doctrine which divides all propositions into two kinds: those which are basic and those which are dependent on basic propositions. True basic propositions do not stand in any need of any evidence or other support in order to establish them, whereas all other propositions do, and they are supported ultimately by