

asides, of allusions to something that writers and readers alike, being Catholics, can take for granted; they are quite secondary to the careful expositions of the conclusions of biblical scholarship. I would prefer the emphasis reversed.

I hope it will not be thought that I am decrying biblical scholarship. I have no doubt at all about the value and the necessity of introducing the ordinary Catholic reader to Messrs J, E, D, and P. To try and understand the Bible while ignoring the achievements of modern criticism would be like trying to appreciate some orchestral music on the assumption that the noise is all produced by one player on one instrument. A Catholic theological understanding of scripture is blocked and stultified for lack of the discriminations that biblical criticism affords.

Perhaps, too, the kind of positive theological and exegetical commentary I dream of is outside the scope of such a series as this. If so, at least it should be recognized that this series demands theological supplementation. Above all it should be acknowledged, and above all by biblical scholars, that for a true understanding of holy scripture biblical scholarship is not enough.

## Reviews

MARTIN BUBER AND CHRISTIANITY, by Hans Urs von Balthasar; The Harvill Press, 195.

Martin Buber, though perhaps not an entirely representative Jew either in formation or in outlook, has nevertheless stood in our time for most of what really matters in the continued existence of the Jews. He is an appropriate partner for a Catholic theologian to choose in this ice-breaking 'dialogue between Israel and the Church'—a real dialogue in the sense which Buber himself has given to the word: a deeply eirenic but uncompromising confrontation of two opposing positions. Dr Balthasar's talent for sympathetic interpretation of somebody else's sense of life needs no advertisement (Buber joins an already very motley company which includes Karl Barth and the Little Flower), and his tensely imbricated German has been turned expertly into English by none less than Alexander Dru, doyen of translators.

Jews and Christians have always been at loggerheads, and it is not too much to say that it was in the logic of that strife that it should have led in the end to

what was done to the Jews in our own day in the very heart of Christian Europe. How could those deaths, the fearful holocausts of the gas-chambers, not challenge us to remember all those other nameless and forgotten Jews who once suffered and prayed for our salvation, the precipitate of whose prayer is still the daily prayer of the Church: 'We are become a reproach to our neighbours: a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, O Lord, wilt thou be angry for ever?'

Buber argues that Christians cannot be anything else but bitterly anti-Jewish. It is true that we are the only other people who really see what the Jewish problem is (as opposed to what philanthropists and politicians may think it is), but we are committed to the belief that the Jews have been cast out by God to make way for us, and a certain discrimination against them is therefore built into true Christian behaviour. It is Dr Balthasar's main contention that this is not so. Our record is certainly deplorable, though it was not unprecedented that Pius XI should have been protesting against Hitler's racial policies as early as December 1933. But whatever Christians have done in the past, or may sometimes think today, the fact remains that to be anti-Jewish at all is ultimately to be anti-Christian. This is so not only because it is to be unjust and anti-human, but also because it runs counter to the attitude to the Jews which is implied in the revealed doctrine of the new testament. 'For I want you to know this mystery', says St Paul, 'that a partial insensibility has befallen Israel until the full number of the gentiles come in, and thus all Israel will be saved'. Put like that, it is not just a pious hope that the present failure of the Jews to recognise the messiah is only a temporary phenomenon: it is part of Christian revelation that it is so. More than that. We may even say that the ultimate conversion of Israel is being delayed to give time for the salvation of the rest of the world. The conversion of Israel is not an ecumenical problem so much as an *eschatological* one. To pray for the conversion of the Jews is to pray for the end of time (which we should be doing anyway).

But there is much more to it than this. Dr Balthasar goes on to describe, and to prescribe, the Christian attitude to Israel, making use principally of the basic discussion in the epistle to the Romans. He brings out the profound unity between the Church and Israel. We have been grafted into the holy root and can never be more than branches: the holy root remains for ever Israel. We shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8. 11). We must go down to what is oldest and most radical in us, to feel the Jewish sap rising in us. The current renewal of theological concern for the Jewish setting of the Christian revelation must be put at the service of a real reappropriation of our Jewish inheritance. This is the point of the Church's continued reading of the literature of Israel.

Perhaps the most interesting chapters are those on the primacy of the prophetic-charismatic element in Israel, as Buber conceives it, and on his mystique of the holy land. These show where the difference between the Christian sense of life and Buber's really lies. It is in the presence or the absence of a certain

tension between grace and nature. The permanent discord between politics and religion which a Christian has to accept disappears when Buber makes the land of Palestine out to be a sacrament, the geographical sign of grace, the field of faithful obedience. The kingdom is to come in the husbandry of that privileged patch of earth. But the first members of the Church were fishermen, and their mission was a complete break with the land—and, after the ascension, with locality at all. The whole idea of evangelisation is absent from Israel.

This is a small book but an important one. If it is true that we are the only other people who understand what the Jews are, it is equally true that it is only if we understand what they are that we can understand what we are ourselves. The Church must one day rejoice with Israel: 'For if the loss of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but *life from the dead*'?

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

LIFE AFTER DEATH, by Maurice and Louis Becqué, c.ss.r.; translated by P. J. Hepburne-Scott; Burns & Oates, Faith and Fact Books, 8s. 6d.

The editors of the series were certainly right in having a volume which deals with life after death. It is curious that Catholics tend to discuss this subject too little; it is a very important aspect of Christian doctrine, and by emphasising the Christian view of death perhaps the most effective impact may be made on modern materialism. This book begins with chapters on the future life in contemporary literature and philosophy. These are useful, but suffer inevitably from the drawback that they are directed to French readers, and the French outlook is not quite the same as the outlook here. Much, however, that is said is naturally of general application, as about the despair caused by unbelief. 'What is the ideal offered to youth? To live wildly in the despair of life, to live a life already dead, worse than death. At this point, anguish has become a god, a god of hell. Man is angered, but the believer resolves his anguish in his faith' (page 32).

Next, there are chapters on the non-Christian world religions and the future life, while the second half of the book sets out the Catholic teaching, first on heaven, and then on hell and purgatory. What is not discussed is the connection between God's plan for the human race in the natural order in this life and in the next, the question: What is it that God wishes man to do on earth? What is man to aim at achieving in temporal affairs so as to show his love for God? How does the carrying out of God's plan in this world affect his plan for the next world? This is an aspect of the problem which needs to be worked out, since otherwise the natural order in this world seems meaningless; it seems to have no purpose. The answer, of course, is in some way to bring in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and of the risen world. We are told: 'The final redemption is our bodily resurrection (Rom. 8. 10). The bodily resurrection and the last judgment are one and the same thing' (page 81). But further explan-