

approach to anti-fundamentalist ideas can do nothing but good.

Inevitably in such a short book there are some topics that are not treated in sufficient depth. The vexed question of whether the idea of covenant is actually present in the Old Testament to the extent that scholars have generally thought is a case in point. But on the whole the lack of discussion on many similar questions is a merciful omission. Many people have been put off Old Testament studies simply because they found it a morass of such argument. Anthony Phillips, using his consider-

able knowledge and experience, has done most of this tedious groundwork so the beginner in biblical studies, at whom this book is primarily directed, can get off with a head start. The book will also be of value to the established student, as the salient theological points are presented in an economical yet unskimped form. One hopes that Anthony Phillips will one day write a full-scale commentary on Genesis. Meanwhile, this is a more than adequate substitute.

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TRINITY AND TEMPORALITY, by John J O'Donnell S J. *Oxford University Press, 1983. pp xi + 215. £15.00.*

Atheists have long lamented the lack of a credible theodicy. Some modern theologians have tried to fill the gap by thinking of God as developing or changing. This is, somehow, supposed to make God more acceptable. According to writers like Jürgen Moltmann it is also a faithful response to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Fr O'Donnell's book is a study of this line of argument, though O'Donnell is particularly concerned with its significance for the theology of the Trinity, for it may be, he says, that 'a deeper penetration into the mystery of the triune God will enable us to rethink our philosophical categories' (p 32). The conclusion then is that 'The Christian God is not the absolute, impassible God of classical philosophical theism . . . The Christian God is the God who suffers in time, who enters our history in the event of Jesus Christ' (p 200).

As an account of one strand in contemporary theology, the book is a useful one. It will serve as a helpful introduction to writers like Charles Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, and Moltmann. But the philosophical issues touched on are treated very naively. The real problem lies in the treatment of impassibility. Thus, for example, the familiar point is made that an immutable God cannot create a contingent world; but nothing is said about the equally familiar reply that the world's contingency does not entail that God creates of neces-

sity since the contingency of the world is a fact about it, not about God. Why cannot the eternal unchanging God create a world whose nature is such that it might not exist? O'Donnell does not deal with this question. Nor does he deal with familiar replies to arguments like the one which says that God must be changeable if he is loving. Here, it seems to me, O'Donnell has sold out to those anthropomorphic theologies for which the nature of love in human beings provides the rules governing what love must be in its divine form. According to such theologies, with which O'Donnell is sympathetic, God, *qua* immutable, is 'indifferent', 'unaffected', 'lifeless' and so on. But the dangers of anthropomorphic theology have been noted time and again, and it has been vigorously denied that the more classical tradition to which it is a reaction has the undesirable entailments claimed for it or that it has undesirable entailments.

My point, then, is that O'Donnell has not provided a rigorous philosophy of God. And this leaves me questioning the true value of the authors it is most concerned to champion. One need not doubt that Revelation takes us far beyond what philosophy can discover; but it will not contradict what we know of God independently of Revelation. *Trinity and Temporality* would have been a better book if it had dealt more thoroughly with this.

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