

**HANDBOOK OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM** by Richard Soulen. Lutterworth Press, 1977. pp. 191 £2.95 paperback.

This book has the distinction of being what it says it is. It is not a Handbook of Biblical Scholarship in general—the hungry fact-finder will search in vain for news on *Herod Antipas*, *Lachish*, or *Scarabs*. Nor is it a Handbook of Biblical Theology: *Charismata*, *Church*, *Son of Man* and *Sin* are unrepresented. Its main concern is with methodologies, as the introduction makes clear; so *Form Criticism*, *Source-Criticism*, *Structuralism*, *Text-Criticism* etc., along with their associated technical terms—e.g. *Chria*, *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (see *Palimpsest*), *Gemeindeordnungen*, *Narrative*—are typical entries. The size of entries varies from about four pages on *Hermeneutics*, to two or three lines on *Daughter Translation* or *Polyglot*. There's a nice tenderness for the students for whom this work is written, as can be seen from the entry headed *Pre-Pauline*: "The term is perhaps self-explanatory, except that it is frequently misunderstood by the tyro in New Testament criticism, for in normal use it refers to doctrines, formulas, ideas etc., which were in existence within the Church prior to Paul's use of them, rather than prior to Paul himself or to his conversion." On the other hand, Dr Soulen doesn't mollificoddle the aforementioned tyro. The entry on Structuralism is at least as difficult as the subject would demand, and perhaps would only be comprehensible to a tyro who had al-

ready rubbed shoulders with Barthes and Company.

Given the guiding principles on which the book is constructed, I would include in my list of its omissions *Deuteronomie Historian*, *Genealogy* and *Testimony* (though there is a short mention of *Florilegium* with reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls). And I don't know on what basis *Glossolalia* is included, unless it is that every American Religious paperback has by law to mention the phenomenon.

Dr Soulen also gives us a brief curriculum vitae of numerous doyens of Biblical criticism, from *Origen* (circa A.D. 185 - 251/254) via *Lessing*, *Gotthold Ephraim* (1729-1781) to *Albright*, *William Foxwell* (1891-1971). On the last of those, I suppose it *might* be useful to a faculty-sherry-party-name-dropper to know that he was "... the recipient of six honorary degrees from foreign universities, and twenty from institutions in the USA", but it might have been more useful to the student to hear how Albright's views on the Old Testament as history differ from those of Alt. And while we're on the subject of name-dropping, why do we have *Lightfoot*, *R. H.* but no *Lightfoot, J. B.*?

But let me not carp. The book is excellent both for reference and for browsing; and £2.95 isn't wildly expensive.

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**A RATIONAL ANIMAL AND OTHER PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS ON THE NATURE OF MAN** by Anthony Flew. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978. pp. 245 £5.95

Flew's aim is to vindicate an Aristotelian view of man in opposition to the Platonic-Cartesian tradition. In doing so, he defends Darwin, Malthus, Hume and others. Bad marks are awarded to writers like B. F. Skinner, Peter Winch, A. C. MacIntyre, Sartre and Lenin. For Flew, man is a rational animal (emphasis equal on 'rational' and 'animal') who is free. At the same time, he is very much a creature of flesh and blood, certainly not a disembodied 'entity'. In accounting for him, it is important not to describe him using only one of the kinds of explanation that are possible.

The book is a collection of writings

published elsewhere and worked over to provide a single volume. In reading it, one often feels bogged down in unnecessary analyses of other people's writings; but the collection still holds together very well. And Flew's position is often cogent and impressive. Some of his discussions, notably those of Sartre and Skinner, are very effective indeed. But there are also some notable lapses.

Take, for example, the chapter on Darwin. According to Flew, Darwin undermines Paley, whose famous argument for God is "annihilated" (p. 26) by the philosophical implications of Darwinism. The argument is not spelled out in detail, but

Flew's point seems to be (1) that, given Darwin on natural selection, one cannot account teleologically for biological phenomena because they are efficiently explicable in terms of fitness and survival, and (2) that, therefore, one cannot speak of biological phenomena in terms of design. However, 'P because previously Q' does not vie with 'Previously Q in order that P'. One cannot, therefore, assume that teleological explanation of natural processes is ruled out because efficient explanation of them is possible. And it is just a fact that teleological descriptions of biological phenomena arise naturally. They are even suggested by the idea of an origin of species by evolution. For the alternative to an origin of species is the arrival of a series of non-classifiable 'things'. If there are species, then there must be considerable resemblance, including resemblance in method of reproduction, between parents and offspring. Furthermore, this resemblance must continue over a considerable period of time.

Presumably, Flew would not regard this argument as successfully attacking his view of the universe. For he also rejects Aquinas's Fifth Way. "The equally decisive reply to this was developed in the century before Darwin by Hume . . . The reply was a question: 'Whatever warrant could we have that the order which we discover in the universe—the only universe we know—is not, as it appears to be, intrinsic, but imposed?'" I cannot, however, see that this observation disposes of Aquinas. In the first place, the quotation of the passage from Hume does nothing very much to further the argument. In this context, one feels like retorting to Flew that a question is not a decisive reply to an argument; that what we need is another argument. Second, rewriting Hume's question as a statement, it can be said that we *have* reason to regard the order in the universe as created. Flew may say that we have no such reason; but, in that case, he had better argue the point and not imply that it is ruled out by a failure in the design argument. He surely ought not to imagine that matters are settled by slinging in a word like 'decisive', and backing it up with a question from Hume.

A further difficulty with Flew's discussion of Darwin concerns the issue of continuity. Darwin says (quoted by Flew

on p. 21) that "As natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favourable variations, it can produce no great and sudden modification. . . . Hence the canon of 'natura non facit saltum', which every fresh addition to our knowledge tends to make more strictly correct, is on this theory simply intelligible. We can plainly see why nature is prodigal in variety, though niggardly in innovation." Flew accepts this thesis owing to "the continuing successes of evolutionary biology". (p. 23) "There cannot," he concludes, "have been any gross discontinuities in the development of humankind from non-human ancestors." (p. 29) Talking about the limits of Darwin's argument, however, Flew also allows that "It certainly does not establish that 'all the various degrees of biological improvement that we find in nature' can be accounted for in these terms" (i.e. in terms of Darwin's argument). (p. 17) The passage continues: "Indeed, by itself it is not even sufficient to show that any new species evolved in this way."

It is hard to see how Flew can make such an admission. For if Darwin's argument does not establish that any new species evolved as Darwin suggests, then how can we know that humankind cannot have emerged in gross discontinuity from non-human ancestors? How can we know that the 'continuing successes of evolutionary biology' really are successes? On Flew's account, Darwin's argument *presupposes* natural selection. And it *presupposes* that nature is niggardly in innovation. It thus offers us a theory which makes intelligible only what the theory has produced of itself as posing a problem. ('I can explain why you're sad; you've lost your girl friend.' 'But how do you know I'm sad?' 'You've lost your girl friend.')

The other major difficulty with the book is its treatment of freedom. On Flew's account, it is important to insist that man is free in that he has a power of choice, a power which is "an ability at will either to do or to refrain from doing whatever it may be." (p. 44) And, in this connection, Flew quotes Locke's distinction ('Of Power') between bodily motion, not of one's own choice, and "a power to begin or forbear, continue or put an end to several actions in himself." But what is the distinction supposed to be? What does it

establish about choice? If I begin or forbear, then I express myself. And, if I express myself, then what I do depends on what I am. But the same applies to bodily motion. The heart thumps away and expresses itself in so doing.

In other words, Flew fails to show why we should feel obliged to draw a distinction between choosing and being compelled. He certainly thinks the distinction is necessary; he evidently holds that a man really has no choice if he is compelled in the sense of being unable to act otherwise than in the way he in fact acts. But he does not succeed in removing the thorny problem of what makes a man choose this rather than that.

According to Flew, "To be a chooser at all, you must be able to do otherwise. You must be able to choose otherwise, that is, in the most fundamental sense; the sense which, as we have seen, can and surely has to be defined ostensibly on the lines indicated in that classic passage from Locke." (p. 105) Certainly, we can distinguish between a ball hitting the ground, and

a man refraining from eating the mouldy cheese. Thus we talk of choice. But is there a difference between the ball and the man of a kind which allows us to assert that all choice is undetermined by contingent necessities? Sartre, says Flew, is wrong, but not entirely reprobate. "For it is both true and enormously worth saying that wherever people were agents they chose to do what they did do, and they always could have done other than they did." (p. 84) Later Flew adds that "What there certainly cannot be, if the moving is truly a moving and not a motion, is an unbroken chain of sufficient physical causes stretching back indefinitely." (p. 117) But I can be free in drinking the whisky, I can choose to drink it, even though my wanting it is not anything I choose for myself, and even though it is my wanting the whisky that makes me drink it. If we are to talk about choice, do we really have to locate it in the absence of sufficient physical causes?

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