

ey, at any one of these three stages, on the contemporary fashionable view, was liable to look rather ridiculous a few years later.

Catholic biblical scholarship is in a peculiar position. From the time of Pius X till 1943 it could hardly exist except as a barely tolerated, if not actually underground, movement (it is ironical that the great Lagrange felt the pressure of Rome so keenly that he turned from his own field of Old Testament scholarship to writing learned commentaries on the Gospels, as though in the latter area one could be both scholarly and honest, and yet avoid the fulminations of the Biblical Commission). After Pius XII's Encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), it was possible for Catholic scholars publicly to resume genuinely critical work on the Bible. But opposition was still strong and it was really the second Vatican Council that threw the doors wide open. By then, however, biblical scholarship in the Protestant world had made enormous strides. It seems to me that Catholic scholars felt it necessary to join in the game at the point which it had by then reached; in other words (if I may be forgiven a vulgarism) to jump on the band wagon. Unfortunately, the wagon, having lacked the stabilising influence that Catholic scholarship might have provided, was by then lurching in a radical and iconoclastic direction. Inevitably,

Catholic scholarship, now free, tended to identify the "best results of scholarship and criticism" with the state of things they found when they joined the band about twenty years ago. I think that we have not yet found a proper balance or a proper direction.

This review is in danger of exceeding all reasonable bounds of length. Let me, then, simply commend to readers Fr Timothy Radcliffe's essay on *Ecclesial authority and biblical interpretation*, Lionel Swain's lucid and magisterial outline: *The Old Testament in the history of Israel*, and Fr Winstone's piece on *The Bible, and liturgy*; with a final word to recommend Adrian Hastings's *The Bible, evangelisation and the world*. Fr Hastings, who writes with the authority of a notable scholar who has also had experience of Africa and the Church in that continent, is excellent on the subject of the potentially fruitful dynamic tension between the Bible and the Church, on the importance of the Bible as perpetually recalling us from any narrow identification of the gospel with the forms and attitudes of the institutional Church of a given time or place, and with the need of freedom in the Church in order that this tension may bear its positive and desirable fruits.

B. C. BUTLER

**SOCIOLOGY AND THEOLOGY: ALLIANCE AND CONFLICT** edited by David Martin, John Orme Mills and W.S.F. Pickering. *The Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980. pp 204.*

This important book is the outcome of a Symposium consisting of theologians (mostly catholic) aware of the importance of sociology to their work, social scientists sympathetic to Christian theology, and philosophers (also friendly). Given this mix the emphasis is more upon alliance than conflict, and rather more on theology than sociology. It is, after all, theology that is under fire, and the contributors seem all to be Christians who recognize the necessity of an intellectual dimension to their faith. Their expertise in, or at least familiarity with the human sciences enables them to identify areas which are already urgent for theology in the eighties.

If by the end we have not been taken very far this is because the collection records the introductory sessions of a continuing discussion. Certainly the seeds of significant developments are present and should be taken up far beyond the limits of this group. The publication of these papers is therefore to be welcomed as a useful stimulus.

The difficulty (for one reviewer, anyway) is that there are so many seeds. Each of the essays offers a challenge to hard thought and lengthy response from someone qualified in the philosophy of the social sciences. They defy summary, so beyond a brief indication of the contents I

shall pick out one recurring and unifying theme.

An agenda – setting introduction by Fr Mills is followed by Eileen Barker on kinds of sociological explanation. These do not displace theology, but they do pose a challenge by setting people's values and goals in social context. In a more difficult but also penetrating essay which is followed by a group discussion Christopher Harris sketches the changing intellectual context of both disciplines, including some discussion of structuralism. David Martin provides a lucid and attractive account of theology and considers the example of role overlap with sociology. He too denies that a sociological analysis should exclude other levels of reference. W. S. F. Pickering explores the limits of collaboration by a discussion of theodicy, central to Weber and Gaston Rahard as well as to western theology.

Moving away from the sociologists, Donald Hudson shows how both disciplines are concerned with 'the rational system of beliefs' or common assumptions of their own society. The sociologist describes it, and the theologian shows his beliefs are credible by reference to it. Hudson claims that philosophy is necessary as a middle term to make their relationship fruitful but could have added that most theologians are well able to do their own midwifery. Robin Gill continues his earlier reflexions on the social context, social determinants and social significance of theology and rightly insists upon its practical dimension. Gregory Baum is also concerned with social determinants: social location of the Christian community, dominant culture, academic institution and the socio-economic class with which a theology is identified. He illuminates the recent past of Roman Catholic theology in ways which are highly suggestive for the future, and insists that religious experience itself is affected by the social context in which it is situated. Fr Mills considers the problem of theologians having to make what look like unsubstantiated sociological utterances. The last three contributions I shall come back to.

The unifying theme of the book turns out to be rather different from what the colloquia organizers and editors intended. Eight of the contributors address themselves, either incidentally or at length to the question, what theology is or ought to be in the new intellectual environment dominated by the social sciences. Every student should read as a part of his introduction to the subject, David Martin's reflexions on 'theology as one of the disciplines which articulate our attempts to make comprehensive sense of the human environment and situation', doing this 'in relation to a particular postulate and a special possibility' (p 47). The theologian articulates a vision by which he is compelled, wishing to show why it is compelling. Every teacher should allow himself to be questioned by Christopher Harris' ideal of both disciplines 'enlarging human self-consciousness and sensibility, but struggling with the problems which the pursuit of this aim involves under social conditions which militate against its realization' (p 35). Fr Baum contrasts 'an academic subject that was taught at the seminaries to prepare young men for the priesthood' with 'a field of enquiry for Christians wrestling with the ambiguities of their culture.'

But the two essays I found most suggestive of all are by Antoine Lion and Timothy Radcliffe. Fr Lion reports on Marxist-Christians in France, their need for a 'theological function' and the extent to which this function has been taken over by sociology. In doing so he throws all kinds of light on the theologian's role and the possibility for new styles of theology. Whatever the future of these 'Christians without a church' their activities could be profoundly significant for those of us who still identify more closely with the old institution. This essay invites much chewing.

Fr Radcliffe denies that references to divine intervention are explanatory. He follows the late Fr Cornelius Ernst in seeing theology as 'an encounter of church and world in which the meaning of the gospels becomes articulate as an illumina-

The great weakness and omission in this book is the near absence of any mention of the scientific study of religion. It seems to me self-evident that Religious Studies provide the melting pot for the kind of relationship explored here, and quite extraordinary that it is ignored. One could apply to this debate the dictum of Richard Roberts that theology without religious studies loses its purchase on reality, and Religious Studies without Theology is reductionist. The omission is partly rectified by Robert Towler in an Epilogue. He has studied contemporary forms of religiousness and recognizes the importance of such descriptive work. But that debate is older and wider than a brief epilogue could be expected to indicate. One hopes that the other contributors, familiar as they are with Max Weber and

tion of the world'. It is neither a discipline nor a perspective, but an activity in which the meaning men make of themselves and their experience is transformed to become a disclosure of God. Any form of discourse by which we interpret our experience is potentially theological. Sociology offers positive possibilities here as well as contributing to the work of critical history in liberating us from the past. Much needs to be unpacked, but these seeds are valuable. St Thomas, might consider the initial confrontation between the empirical study of religion and normative theology in liberal protestantism, and the significant developments taking place in America today.

ROBERT MORGAN

**ROMERO: EL SALVADOR'S MARTYR** by Dermot Keogh. *Dominican Publications, Dublin, 1981. pp 160 Stg £2.80. Ir. £3.30 p.b.*

Dermot Keogh was present at the funeral of Archbishop Romero, which he had gone to report for RTE. About 100,000 people were in the Cathedral Square of San Salvador when shots were fired from the region of the Palacio Nacional. Many people including Dr Keogh took refuge inside the Cathedral . . .

"Where are the police and the army?" I asked, with all the indignation of one who had lived in a democracy all his life. "Outside shooting in at us", was the laconic reply from an old man who found it pathetic that anyone could ask such a naive question. This was a lesson in the philosophy of national security.'

This hastily produced, but timely book makes an excellent introduction to the plight of ordinary people in El Salvador – and, in general, in Latin America. El Salvador's Catholic Church provides a clear example of the different responses to the Latin American situation which Catholics may make. Romero's own history shows the joys and perils of honest Christian discipleship in the national security state. Influenced profoundly by the life and death of his Jesuit friend Rutilio Grande, he saw that the situation required one fundamental option: to be for or ag-

ainst the oppressor; despite much opposition from within the hierarchy in El Salvador, he maintained the option for the poor which had been expressed at Medellin in 1968 and again, with much reactionary opposition, at Puebla in 1979.

The book is good on the history of El Salvador in the past century – the social implications of the decision to go for intensive coffee cultivation, the brutally repressed uprising in 1932, the various fraudulent elections since then, the present shape of the junta, and the names and initials of the various groups on the left and the right which, apart from the security forces and the USA, are the main protagonists in the present struggle.

It is not so strong on analysis, although it is not without some hints in the proper direction. But it is not enough merely to describe the glaring differences between rich and poor: it is necessary also to explain how and why this difference is there, and to recognise that it will continue to be there until the economic and power-relationships are radically altered. The Popular Organisations which Dr Keogh chides for not trying to give the junta a try in October 1979 were perhaps more aware of the realities than he is prepared to be.