

for any discussion of theology or philosophy among the educated orthodox of any of the 'great' religions. The coherence of many African tribal religions is often apparent, as Mr Parrinder suggests, on a poetic and metaphorical, and not any doctrinal or philosophical, level; it is probably in that direction that we need to seek to understand the strength of African religion, and its dignity as a subject of serious study. When reduced to a matter of intuitions of theological and philosophical propositions which have been more fully developed by other, literate, peoples, any African tribal religion must necessarily appear at a disadvantage. This is far from Mr Parrinder's intention; indeed, he is well-known for his efforts to lead his readers to a fuller understanding and sympathy than has often been considered possible, for notions which the ignorant and self-complacent still easily dismiss as gibberish. If this book should encourage any of them to read some of the works in its bibliography, it will have served a useful purpose. I doubt if it will do so, however, unless they are interested in representing African religion primarily as an intuition of the Christian revelation. This will scarcely advance our knowledge of African tribal religions, and may obscure those differences between them and other religions which make them worthy of special investigation.

R. G. LIENHARDT

THE WESTERN DILEMMA. By Alan Gordon Smith. (Longmans; 11s. 6d.)

The western dilemma, as Mr Gordon Smith sees it, is that we in the West have lost faith not only in Christianity but also in reason. We continue to believe in certain human values, but we have no weapons left with which to defend them. For it is the power of reason to know anything with certainty which cannot be verified by sense experience which is now in question. The first part of his book is therefore a study of the grounds for 'belief in reason', and we recommend it as one of the most effective answers to the Logical Positivist position which we have ever read. For Mr Gordon Smith meets the Logical Positivist on his own ground. That all knowledge is derived from sense experience is a position common to both Logical Positivist and Thomist; it is therefore from the analysis of sense experience that all philosophy must start. But it is here that Mr Gordon Smith finds fault with the whole empiricist tradition which derives from Hume; it has failed to analyse the data of sense experience correctly. He then goes on to show that all the fundamental metaphysical ideas of existence, substance, causality and freedom are derived directly from sense experience. They are derived from reflection on the 'initial consciousness of lived reality', from a primitive awareness which precedes all rational consciousness and even sense perception, but which upon reflection becomes a

certainty 'no less than a demonstration in geometry upon reflection becomes a certainty'.

Having thus established the initial certainty of metaphysical knowledge, Mr Gordon Smith then goes on to consider our knowledge of the physical world. Here he makes the important point that we have no absolute knowledge of anything. All our knowledge is relative to ourselves; as the scholastic saying has it, *omnis cognitio in cognoscente ad modum cognoscentis*. This is particularly evident in the physical sciences which give us knowledge of reality, but of reality seen from a particular point of view, true as far as it goes, but always relative and provisional. The reason for this is shown in a really brilliant analysis of matter and change. Mr Gordon Smith uses the Aristotelian formulas of act and potency, but his analysis not only of matter in general but of the relation between soul and body is profoundly original. It is a perfect example of that translation of traditional philosophy into the terms of modern thought, which is the greatest need of our time. From this he is able to lead on to pose the question of the existence of God in terms which make it a good deal less 'meaningless' than it is sometimes made to appear.

The second part of the book is a study of 'reason in belief'. Here again his approach is equally original and convincing. He starts again from the empirical standpoint. Religion in general is a fact, a phenomenon, which any philosophy worthy of the name must take into consideration. Christianity in turn is a recognizable religious phenomenon, which demands to be studied as such. We can approach Christianity in two different ways, each of which will be found to react on the other. We can examine it as a historical phenomenon, studying its sources according to the best critical methods. At this point Mr Gordon Smith gives a short summary of the gospel message in a chapter called 'The Unique Event', as impressive in its way as anything of Mr C. S. Lewis's, and shows the pattern of doctrine and practice and institution which emerges from the New Testament. But to complete this picture we have to turn to Christianity as it presents itself to us at the present day. We have to examine the different 'churches' and see how they correspond with the original pattern, and how one throws light on the other. The chapter which he calls 'The Unique Coincidence', in which the evidence is seen to converge on one Church and one Church alone, is extraordinarily well done. It will not, of course, convince everyone, but it is surely a model of a rational apologetic. It is not sufficient to convince anyone against his will, but it is sufficient to give rational grounds for belief to anyone who has the will to believe. 'There is enough light', as Pascal said, 'for those whose only desire is to see; enough darkness for those who have no such desire.'

The Christian message is always the same, but it has to be presented to each generation in terms which are suited to its particular mode of thought. This is the most convincing presentation of that message to our own generation which we have seen.

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SPINOZA'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE. By G. H. R. Parkinson. (Oxford University Press; Geoffrey Cumberlege; 21s.)

Spinoza has been most often studied as first and foremost a metaphysician, with his theory of knowledge forming a chapter of his metaphysics. Among modern philosophers, Samuel Alexander liked to claim descent from Spinoza, and, for all the idiosyncrasy of the claim, it drew attention to an important feature of the affinity between the two thinkers: their refusal to make the construction of a metaphysical system wait upon the 'theory of knowledge'. This latter, as Alexander insisted, was to be only 'a chapter, though an important one, in the wider science of metaphysics, and not its indispensable foundation'. The great merit of Dr Parkinson's book is that it subjects this 'important chapter' of Spinoza's metaphysics to a careful scrutiny, which shows it to have had a much more decisive influence—though always interwoven with metaphysics—on the whole of which it forms a part, than either Spinoza or Alexander would have admitted.

The book begins with a study of the methodology Spinoza set himself, and concludes that the 'geometrical order' in which he cast the *Ethics* was demanded by, and expressed the deductive nature of, his methodology. Following Spinoza, however, into the construction of this deductive system, Dr Parkinson finds that, in fact, Spinoza's conclusions do not 'follow from his premises in the same way that the theorems of geometry follow from axioms and definitions'. In this, as in his rejection of the view that the geometrical order was adopted by Spinoza as a method of exposition without involving a claim to express a deductive system, he is surely right. His own suggestion is that Spinoza appears to have chosen 'to exhibit synthetic *a priori* truths in a guise more suited to analytic truths—that of a mathematical system. He wanted to say that all things depended on God, for in this way he summed up that unity of system at which the science of his time aimed. But he failed to note that their dependence on God was not a logical dependence. . . .' This suggestion is offered to make sense of the discrepancy between the claims and the achievements of the methodology; as an account of what Spinoza 'wanted to say', it would, indeed, hardly do. But to be fair to this study, it should be pointed out that it has set itself a more limited, and perhaps a more fruitful, task. And this is here carried out with admirable clarity and precision, without, at the same