

in developing his argument Veatch has some very cogent points to make against writers both classical and contemporary. He is, for example, usefully provocative with respect to Kant. And, to take another instance, he has some thoughtful things to say against authors such as John Finnis (cf. *Fundamentals of Ethics*, Oxford 1983), with whom his views might be compared, but whose final position is shown by Veatch to be subject to embarrassing queries. Readers of Veatch will quickly become annoyed by his style of writing, for, though he is always refreshingly clear, he is far too fond of rhetorical questions. They come thick and fast and they are, quite frankly, tiring. But this is a relatively minor criticism. Veatch has given us an important and lively essay on morality which can be favourably compared with some of the best recent apologies for Aristotelian ethics. It can, for example, be set beside texts like *The Virtues* by P.T. Geach (Cambridge 1977), *After Virtue* by Alasdair MacIntyre (London 1981) and *Ethica Thomistica* by Ralph McInerny (Washington 1982).

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DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN SUFFERING, ed. James Walsh, S.J. and P.G. Walsh. *Message of the Father of the Church 17*. Michael Glazier Inc., Wilmington, Del., U.S.A.

This volume belongs to a series in which themes are treated by the selection and presentation of patristic material. A brief introduction and some link passages help to fill out the skeleton of chapter topics under which the passages are arranged. The topics covered are: firstly, Providence and Evil; secondly, Suffering and Christian Growth; thirdly, Vicarious Suffering: Jesus the Suffering Servant; fourthly, Death, the Gateway to Life. An appendix reprints a reflection on the subject by one of the editors, and the rather more lengthy apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II on the Christian Significance of Human Suffering.

The object of such a presentation must be to provide a representative selection of the material, and a coverage of the major themes and ideas in the patristic discussion. The latter task is adequately done by the four themes chosen. However, the proportion of Latin material seems rather too high, and the focus rather too much on the fully developed discussion found in the Western writings of Augustine, his contemporaries and his successors. It is inevitable that the focus will be on material best known to the editors, and other scholars would provide a quite different selection, but it would surely have been more representative if more attention had been paid to the Greek tradition. The selection has given too homogeneous an impression, and has not given sufficient attention to the anvils on which the patristic answers were forged.

The introduction suggests that the Fathers rarely posed our questions about the presence of suffering in the world, and even suggests that they had less experience of 'the incredible violence, genocide, exploitation, famine and the rest which are modern man's constant companions.' This is not born out by the contents of the book, let alone the facts. The whole of the *City of God* is in a sense a work of theodicy, and in wrestling with Manichaeism, Augustine articulated the questions very forcibly (p. 27 & cf. Ps. Dionysius on p. 31). It is true that most patristic writers simply align themselves with the optimism of the ancient philosophical tradition that the world is good and subject to God's providence, but this consensus was the result of the prolonged battle with gnosticism. For gnostics the questions of theodicy were so serious that they could only conclude that the world was the creation of a fallen demiurge, and Christian apocalypticism was itself dualistic, regarding the world as subject to the devil rather than God. Let us never forget that sickness, death and hardship were far nearer home in the ancient world than they are for us in the affluent West today. We are cushioned from reality in a way the ancients were not, and far less aware of our mortality. Had more attention been paid to the debates with dualism and fatalism, both key issues in patristic apologetics, the impression given would be less

misleading. What is Origen's *De Principiis* but an attempt to deal with precisely the questions we have about the apparent unfairness of life?

The background to the patristic viewpoint is to be found in philosophical debates about fate and providence. The background to their comments on facing suffering is to be found in the *consolatio*. Insufficient attention is given to this background, and there is no attempt to draw on the material most indebted to it, like the consolatory letters of Basil of Caesarea, or John Chrysostom's correspondence with Olympias. Nevertheless, a good impression is given of patristic use of scripture in facing these questions, and of the importance of the cross and resurrection in giving assurance of victory over suffering and death. On the whole the translations are readable, though the style of much patristic writing is an acquired taste, and probably many readers will find it difficult to concentrate on much of it at a time. For all that the editors are to be congratulated on attempting the task, and for the manner in which it has for the most part been accomplished.

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THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM by Gavin D'Costa. *Blackwell 1986*, pp. 155, £8.95.

In this book Gavin D'Costa (an Indian Roman Catholic from East Africa who is a lecturer in the West London Institute of Higher Education) examines three types of Christian attitude to non-Christian religions that have been current in the last hundred years. First, there is 'pluralism' according to which Christianity 'should be seen as just one among many equally salvific paths to the divine reality' (p. 7). Secondly, there is 'exclusivism' that maintains 'that other religions are marked by humankind's fundamental sinfulness and are therefore erroneous, and that Christ (or Christianity) offers the only valid path to salvation' (p. 52). Thirdly, there is 'inclusivism' according to which God is salvifically present in non-Christian religions although the latter are fulfilled in Christ and the Church. The substance of the book is devoted to critiques of Hick, Kraemer and Rahner as representatives of these three types respectively. D'Costa opts for a form of inclusivism that will do justice to the following two axioms: 'that salvation comes through God in Christ alone, and that God's salvific will is truly universal' (p. 136).

This is a valuable survey. The classification according to the preceding three types is valid; and the discussion of the three writers chosen is thorough. D'Costa's criticisms of Hick and Kraemer are both fair and cogent. Thus he points out that Hick's postulation of belief in an all-loving God as the basis of his 'Copernican' theology excludes large areas of Hinduism and Buddhism from which a personal God is absent (just as, we might add, it excludes all those manifestations of polytheism and animism in primitive religions which pluralists are apt to ignore but from which so many missionaries of earlier times proclaimed deliverance). Again, D'Costa observes that Hick's claim for identity among religions presupposes a highly questionable view of the Incarnation in terms of 'myth'. D'Costa then shows, with reference to Kraemer, that exclusivism ignores obvious points of similarity between Christianity and other religions; that it raises a special difficulty with regard to the Old Testament; and that it gives no answer to the tormenting question raised by the fact that millions of people have never heard of Christ. We are also forced to wonder whether Kraemer is consistent.

I agree with D'Costa in subscribing to inclusivism (that seems to be the only course open if we reject pluralism and exclusivism). I also agree with him when he maintains that, although Christians attach supremacy to Christ as the expression of God's saving will and see in him the fulfiller of all religious truth, they can learn more about their own faith through dialogue with non-Christians. Yet D'Costa leaves us with these questions. Can we intelligibly claim (as he claims, e.g. on p. 84) that God in Christ is or was present in those to whom Christ is or was entirely unknown? D'Costa suggests that we interpret the relation