

participants, if performers be not the word).

And here much remains to be done to find a means of presenting religion in terms that are intellectually respectable as well as visually interesting. The ghastly gimmicks that seek to make an epilogue acceptable - the unlikely air of spontaneity ('As I was coming along to the studio') or the unsuitable visual aids (Gothic shots or crowds filmed to suggest the toiling workers to be redeemed) - are an example of the sort of superficiality that bedevils religious programmes, as though they could be made palatable by second-hand tricks learned in last year's magazine programmes.

Perhaps the trouble is - and here Pilkington should provide a useful hint or two - that, in trying to reach everyone, the religious producers are reaching no one in particular. Religion is left vaguely suspended in the customary cocoon of 'opinion'. The qualitative approach matters, even though the quantitative is all the planners seem to care about. And if religion is so constantly presented as though it were a matter of 'news' - a more venerable form of vegetarianism - it is scarcely surprising that its television impact is so pathetically slight.

What Pilkington is saying, beneath the verbiage and the message, has its real importance for religious broadcasting. It might be summed up as saying that those who believe in the responsibility of what they are doing should concentrate hard on a presentation that is adult and professionally respectable, even though it may only be a tiny break in the universal cotton-wool cloud of the popular programming. For Christians, the challenge of the new media of mass communication is urgent, and it can only be met if good intentions are matched by intelligence, imagination and sheer technical skill. It means, too, a recognition that religion means more than round-the-table opinion sampling: it means love and destiny and death and all else besides.

A. I.

## Reviews

**MEDICAL ETHICS** by Charles J. McFadden, O.S.A., PH.D. 5th Edition; Burns and Oates; 25s.

**PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL ETHICS** by John P. Kenny, O.P., PH.D., The Newman Press; Westminster, Maryland. \$4.50.

During the past seventeen years or more Father McFadden's name has been well known in the field of medical ethics by reason of the popularity of his textbooks. It has been a period in which much has been happening in this field. Many new medical techniques and procedures have been introduced, new drugs

have been discovered, new responsibilities have been laid upon medical art by the social and political sciences. Moreover, there have been numerous papal pronouncements upon these matters, and moralists have been busy speculating upon the problems brought to light by the advances of medicine, and investigating the implications of the various utterances of the Holy See. The new editions of Father McFadden's work which have appeared over this period of time have required extensive revision to keep them up to date. The present, and fifth, edition of his *Medical Ethics* which is now offered to the public is in fact a very thorough revision, and includes the discussion of a number of new and important topics, and has light to add to old topics because of recent scientific discoveries. This revision has been effected without adding to the volume of the work, for it was possible to abridge or to eliminate the discussion of some questions because developments in medical practice or the clear establishment of some points by moralists has made it unnecessary to allot the same space to their treatment as formerly.

In view, however, of the responsibility which Father McFadden feels as the author of a text which, he tells us, is almost universally accepted in our schools (p. xiii), it is to be regretted that his presentation of Catholic thought on certain questions is not without some blemish. One rather important example of this is his treatment of contraception and of the 'safe-period method' of birth control. Admittedly it is no easy thing to put the Catholic case cogently enough to make it impressive to non-Catholic readers. It was possibly in view of this difficulty that Father McFadden chose in the present edition to re-write completely his chapter on *Contraception*. Among the changes introduced in the present, as compared with the fourth edition, there is a more elaborate exposition of the analogy between man's reproductive and his other 'faculties' ordained either to the good of the individual or the good of society. A 'faculty' is perverted when used in such a way that it will not attain the primary purpose for which the Creator has made it: 'In a word, the moral obligation immediately rests upon our shoulders to use these powers in their proper and natural manner, to so exercise our free will control over them that they may attain the primary purpose for which the Creator has fashioned them' (p. 75). Now this analogy is no doubt basically sound, and the argument dependent upon it a valid one. But it needs careful development and exposition or it will appear nonsense to an impartial mind not conditioned to the scholastic thought underlying the principles which we enunciate so glibly. Father McFadden speaks of our 'faculty of drinking,' and with equal felicity could also, presumably, have spoken of our faculty of using a hyperdermic needle, or our faculty of driving a motor car, or our faculty of smoking. In connection with the drinking faculty, he comes up with this remarkable statement: 'Drunkenness is immoral precisely because it involves an abuse of our power of drinking' (p. 77). There is a like pronouncement two paragraphs above with regard to gluttony.

Surely we cannot say that drunkenness is an abuse of the power of drinking, unless we can show in some other way that it is morally objectionable. This

confusion of the place of cart and horse in the matter of the 'drinking faculty' only muddies the argument when we come to apply the analogy to the use of the reproductive powers. But although we may allow the analogy, our argument is not going to impress one who does not share our principles if we do not show two things. First, that the perversion or misuse of the sexual powers involves the grave moral disorder claimed by the Catholic, even though the common or garden variety of misuse of our other 'faculties' supposes malice of only a relatively minor kind, or a sin which, in St Thomas's language, is not so much *contra* as *praeter legem*. Thus, to lie, or to overindulge in food and drink, as such, is a venial sin at most. The use of intoxicants in notable quantity is a special case because of the mutilation they cause by depriving a person of his use of reason. But the fact that this is effected by abuse of the 'drinking faculty' is unimportant, for the moral disorder would be substantially the same whether the intoxicant were taken by inhalation, by eating, or by needle. And even where it is drinking which actually does the damage, other 'faculties' are misused in the act – the locomotive powers by taking the person to the venter of the intoxicant, the power of speech in calling for it, etc. But we do not trouble to sort all this out. We rightly think it unimportant to evaluate the act in terms of the faculty abused, and are content to consider simply what is done.

The second thing which needs to be shown is why there is no perversion or misuse of man's reproductive faculty when it is used during sterility, either temporary or permanent, for in these circumstances it would seem that the faculty does not and indeed cannot attain the primary purpose for which the Creator has fashioned it.

These are difficulties which will occur more or less spontaneously to the mind of a non-Catholic, or even of a Catholic, who considers our argument. They are not insurmountable, but Father McFadden does not appear to have surmounted, not indeed even to have considered them.

If one may find occasional though rare cause either for disagreeing with Father McFadden or for being less than satisfied with his argument, there is on the other hand in this book much material, assiduously collected and well presented, which the doctor or nurse or student will find helpful. Father McFadden is particularly to be congratulated upon his addition of the chapter entitled: 'The Rights of the Patient in the Spiritual Order.' This remedied an important lack in earlier editions. One is pleased to note that under this heading some attention is given to the spiritual needs of the non-Catholic patient in a Catholic hospital, or under the care of a Catholic doctor or nurse. After the appearance of the fourth edition of this work, a specific and admirably forthright directive seems to have been inserted in the Ethical Code for Catholic Hospitals (in the United States and Canada) with regard to non-Catholic patients who want the assistance of their minister or rabbi. This has made it easier for Catholic authors to give up their uncomfortable hedging on this question and their cautious pussy-footing in the paths marked out by European moralists. The latter appear to have considered this question as it presents itself in a more or less completely

Catholic environment in which the possibility of scandal has to be reckoned with more seriously than in a pluralistic society in which individuals are unlikely to misinterpret ordinary courtesy in such matters.

Father Kenny's book covers much the same ground as that of Father McFadden, but it does so with considerably more brevity, and for this reason is perhaps better adapted for text book use in schools where less time is allotted to the study of ethics. It is well organized, clear and forceful in its presentation, but because of its brevity, it is less comprehensive than Father McFadden's work, and hence somewhat less valuable for purposes of reference.

KEVIN MEAGHER, O.P.

**MECHANISM AND VITALISM, Philosophical Aspects of Biology**, by Rainer Schubert-Soldern. Edited by Philip C. Fothergill; Burns and Oates; 42s. od.

'We looked for a beetle under a stone and confirmed both had an origin, but only the beetle had a purpose', states Rainer Schubert-Soldern in one of his pithy contrasts found in this text on theoretical biology. Schubert-Soldern, professor at the Vienna Institute for Experimental Zoology, Anatomy and Physiology, conducts a scientific enquiry into the nature of life. The crux of the discussion is whether life can be explained completely by physics and chemistry. He begins with the chemical laws which govern the reactions in living things and instead of arriving at a mechanistic theory of life, which is the usual conclusion from such a beginning, he uses the same scientific basis to arrive at a vitalistic theory. He does this by using the epistemological principle which can be the only source of knowledge in experimental sciences, namely, direct sense perception. The principle is used to draw conclusions on the relationships of molecules to the living cell and in turn to the whole organism from specific experimental data.

In investigating the sources of energy and the nature of the physico-chemical processes involved in a living cell the author leads the reader to the conclusion that the living cell exhibits chemical reactions which tend in a direction of order and balanced instability which the molecules by themselves are quite incapable. The dead cell lacks this directive principle of order; it is only the living cell that is the fundamental unit of life.

From a variety of experiments with multicellular systems he develops the principle that the whole organism as well as the cell has a causal order, a purposiveness or end in view. In one such experiment the author describes a remarkable tissue transplant from a frog to a salamander. The primitive gut of a frog was transferred to the mouth area of a salamander embryo. In the body of the salamander the gut membrane of the frog produced a mouth where a mouth ought to be - but it was a frog's mouth! Results of this kind provide the author with rich experimental evidence for his discussions. In this case he shows that in multicellular organisms two systems of laws are operating with the