

However, like most philosophers who are Catholics in private life (so to speak), Rescher is no great shakes theologically.

It is not very clear that Donald MacKinnon (1913-94), the third figure whom Murray brings on stage, would have relished hearing his writings hailed as 'exemplifying a pragmatic-idealist approach to theology'. He frequently inveighed against all forms of philosophical idealism, deploring its deleterious effects, as he judged them, in much contemporary theology. Interestingly, though the name of Michael Dummett occurs early in the book, Murray has no occasion to mention it in the chapter on MacKinnon, notwithstanding that MacKinnon often cited Dummett's work on realism and anti-realism when he wanted to reaffirm his own commitment to full blooded realism.

MacKinnon, however, as readers of *A Study in Ethical Theory* (1957) would know, the product of his lectures at Aberdeen, constantly related moral philosophy to epistemology. In this sense, as Murray rightly insists, MacKinnon treated the cognitive and practical dimensions of human rationality together and may be said, then, to have combined 'a sustained attempt to think through the tensions between empiricist realism and idealist constructivism with a concern to bring ethical questions arising from the practical-political dimensions of human life to the fore in any treatment of truth and knowledge' (p. 165).

MacKinnon's work as a philosopher, as Murray now demonstrates, cannot be separated from the Christological focus that influences it throughout. The truth claims regarding the reality of the historical individual Jesus of Nazareth, including the resurrection, are not to be watered down and wished away in rhetoric about inspiring symbols. Far from fitting theology into philosophy, MacKinnon's metaphysical realism begins to seem embedded in the contingent details of Jesus's life and death.

While Murray is well aware of the problems associated with MacKinnon's assumptions about Kant and Barth he does not extend his discussion into any very radical critique. In the end, MacKinnon's 'practice of Christian theology in pragmatic-idealist perspective' offers an example of theological rationality from which Catholic theologians in particular have much to learn. As far as taking the project forward, Murray points in the concluding sentence of the book to the title of a recent book by Nicholas M. Healy: *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*. It's the subtitle that he likes.

Fertile suggestions abound throughout this fascinating book. For example, what might seem an unlikely parallel between MacKinnon's procedures and Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist readings of texts leads down to a footnote in which Murray insists that 'contrary to the interpretation that has frequently been placed on them, Derrida's writings can be read as aiming more at the liberation of truth through radical critique of all proffered notions than its dissolution into linguistic free-play' (p. 174). MacKinnon articulated the same 'sense of dialectical tension' in his 'counterpointal studies of the respective strengths and weaknesses of utilitarianism and ethical intuitionism'. Here, as in a score of similarly diverting sallies, Murray makes you think – even if you are not always entirely persuaded. The book is a pleasure to read.

FERGUS KERR OP

ECUMENISM & PHILOSOPHY: PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS FOR A RENEWAL OF DIALOGUE by Charles Morerod OP (*Ave Maria University Press: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2006*). Pp. xxiii + 199, £13.95 pbk.

Fr Morerod has made a refreshing and fruitful contribution to ecumenical theology. Perceiving the history of ecumenical dialogue since Vatican II as having fallen

into two phases, namely, a rapid rapprochement in discovering common ground, followed by the asking of what are the fundamental differences that still divide the Christian confessions, he suggests in Part I that some of the remaining obstacles to unity which we need to identify may be in themselves philosophical.

Morerod holds that practitioners of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue have employed, whether consciously or not, principles of dialogue which are rooted in the scientific culture that is dominant in our time. He makes his own examination of how philosophers, principally Popper, Kuhn and Feyerabend, have approached the understanding of the relationship between scientific systems. What he discovers is an incommensurability among scientific theories based on the limitation of human understanding, and thus a difficulty in choosing between systems, since each system addresses its own favoured questions which are not easily transferred to another. A crucial point, for Morerod, is that theological questions in demand of ecumenical dialogue differ from scientific ones on account of the fact of revelation by a God whose knowledge is unlimited. Thus Morerod scorns a merely pluralistic yet amiable future for the partners of ecumenical dialogue. However, despite the fact that the key difference here is made by revelation, the distinction between dialogues is not established without the aid of philosophical distinctions.

Not only does Morerod call on philosophy to clarify what is going on in ecumenical dialogue as such, but in Part II he also makes use of philosophy to address a principal question for that dialogue, that is, the historic division over justification. Morerod thinks that, since Luther intended to banish philosophy, the strictly philosophical distinctions between Catholics and Protestants have been ignored by ecumenists. He characterises Luther as having nevertheless imbibed a roughly 'Scotist' metaphysics, and he examines the questions that arise about the relationship between God and humanity in a manner not unfamiliar to Thomists. Morerod argues that Luther (and many others) fall foul of a false competition between divine and human action, where something cannot be entirely the work of God and entirely the work of a creature, where a role for the human will in justification is excluded by divine activity. Morerod notes that various moderns have rejected God in favour of human freedom, a choice made on the basis of the same philosophical presuppositions.

Against this false dichotomy and the theological impasse it engenders, he presents Aquinas's understanding of the radical difference between God and humanity, the compatibility of primary and secondary causes, where each in its own order is entirely responsible for an effect, and the notion of instrumental cause, by which the life of grace is well integrated, theologically speaking, into the life of humanity. Morerod suggests that a disengagement by Protestants from the philosophy that has dominated the Reformation and modernity would better serve the very cause of the Reformation. His argument is very much one for Thomism as the solution to ecumenical difficulties, and it makes me wonder what account Morerod would want to give of a healthy theological pluralism. Perhaps he will engage with that question elsewhere – in this book he has already promised to address not only the question of what is the proper goal of ecumenical dialogue but also of what should be the nature of the debate between ecumenical partners over the interpretation of what God has revealed to us.

SIMON FRANCIS GAINÉ OP

Wittgenstein's Religious Point of View by Tim Labron (*Continuum*: London, 2006). Pp. 163, £60 hbk.

In his book *Dying for God*, Daniel Boyarin discusses the attitudes to martyrdom of Rabbinic Jews and Christians. For Boyarin differences between the Talmud