

death. The conclusion is ‘that we should live the fleeting day with passion and, when the night comes, depart from it with grace.’

Obviously, this is not a book in which Holloway attempts to offer an apologetic for traditional Christian faith and many will reject it simply on that score, and I wouldn’t want to agree with every word contained therein (he concedes perhaps too much to an all pervasive scientific narrative too swiftly). Nevertheless there is much here that is the product of a mature pondering on the ambiguities of faithful living in the modern world, such that virtually everyone, if they are honest, will find something that rings true with their own experience. Preachers too will benefit from the particularly rich use that Holloway makes of poetry, literature and artistic allusion to elaborate his points.

Peter McEnhill,
Cambridge



Christ and Human Rights: The Transformative Engagement,
George Newlands, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, pp. 218,
ISBN 0754652106. pbk £15.99, hbk £55.00

George Newlands continues his prolific output of the past few years with this important and timely book on the relevance of Christian belief in Jesus Christ to the subject of human rights. Newlands’ approach to the subject is classically liberal in that he wants to engage in a reasoned dialogue with secular thought from the distinctive perspective that faith in Jesus Christ affords. He thus neither wants to dominate the discussion through final appeal to dominating norms of theological discourse, nor to simply dissolve the distinctive insights that faith might bring into the more general categories that ethical discourse might proffer. As such the book runs the risk of appealing neither to the resurgently orthodox, nor to the resolutely secular. A problem of which, I feel sure, Newlands is all too well aware.

As one might expect from Professor Newlands, the perspective taken is generous, liberal and humane. The scholarship displayed is vast and

the references wide-ranging, though this is at points disorienting as the pace feels somewhat break-neck as we cover scholars as diverse as Rawls, Rorty, Taylor and Nussbaum (and many others) on the one hand, and Barth, Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer, Grotius, Moltmann, Althaus-Reid, Stackhouse and just about everyone else on the other. In truth, amid the profusion of citation, it sometimes becomes a little difficult to remain focussed on the particular point being developed, and the book clearly benefits from those points when the author himself disavows offering ‘yet another general survey of a huge raft of writers’ (p.25) and engages in close dialogue with a single figure – in this case Michael Ignatieff. Similarly in his retrieval of the ‘Way of Schleiermacher’ (p.148 and following) Newlands is to be commended for showing the possibilities latent in that rich tradition.

Chapters eight and nine bring the results of the earlier discussions to fruition as Newlands skilfully and insightfully negotiates his way through to a post-foundational theory of rights. This is no small feat and many a student will learn much about contemporary moral and ethical scholarship from this treatment of the topic as Newlands judiciously negotiates his way through the morass to develop a ‘thick culture’ of human rights. Similarly, in chapter nine, Newlands shows the promise of the ‘Christomorphic trace’ that he has been developing for the establishment of a grounded theory of human rights. This ‘trace’ emphasises the unconditional love of God as shown in Christ’s words and actions, which is already a life and a love focussed on the marginalized and the dispossessed. In the Christian understanding of this life as the instantiation of God’s love for humanity it is also salvation for all of humanity, and this salvation has social, physical and political implications too. At this point Newlands notes that he is not aware of anyone making a formal theological connection between human rights and salvation (p.165) and it is perhaps a missed opportunity in this work that he himself does not make that connection more explicit. Nevertheless, Newlands does briefly suggest at various points how major concepts such as Trinity, Church, incarnation, reconciliation and the image of God might offer insights into the discourse of human rights. But these are not to be deployed exclusively, and one aspect of

Newlands' use of the 'Christomorphic trace' is that it is wider than the Christian community because the Spirit is not limited to the Church.

Newlands is no simple-minded woolly idealist and the final chapter explores how these insights might be deployed in 'making human rights stick'. A difficult task, particularly when one remembers that not every understanding of the Christian faith has had a positive impact on the development of human rights. However, in a pragmatic age where human rights are much espoused in public and routinely violated in private, it is surely right that Christian thinkers lend their voices to the debate. Newlands is thus to be congratulated for the timeliness of his study and for his sense that human rights are simply too important to be left entirely to the forum of secular discourse. Christian theology – as he so clearly shows – has not been without influence, directly and indirectly, in the long struggle to articulate the basis of those rights. This struggle goes on, perhaps today in ways that would have surprised us only a few years ago. Newlands is to be commended for joining the fray by offering this thoroughly humane, insightful, generous and, if he will permit it, Christian treatment of the topic.

Peter McEnhill,
Cambridge