to illustrate the epistemological process under discussion are ‘life after death’ and Einstein’s theory of relativity. Neither of these seem to me to be a metaphor in any sensible sense of the term.

So, while much food for thought may be gleaned from these reflections, Ricoeur’s enthusiasm must surely be deemed excessive. The two occurrences of the word ‘immanent’ on pp. 182/3 should, of course, be ‘imminent’.

**BRIAN HEBBLETHWAITE**


So far as the trajectory of British religion is concerned, there can be few more interesting issues than the relationship of the Churches to broadcasting. The medium of broadcasting was uniquely powerful and its advent almost comparable to the invention of printing. Clearly it offered both an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity (as some saw it) was the evangelization of England. The threat was the provision of programmes which would draw people away from Church to listen at home passively and intermittently.

As Dr Wolfe points out, it is difficult to decide whether the Churches muffed a great opportunity or did the best that might be achieved in a society undergoing secularization. The net result of pressures and counterpressures was ‘BBC religion’. This kind of religion owed a great deal to John Reith, who was the formative influence on the BBC, and held to a form of non-ecclesiastical Presbyterianism. The characteristics of BBC religion were a sense of religion and the nation, an emphasis on education, an ecumenical softening of denominational differences, a reduced sense of dogmatic definition. The prophets of this religion were Dick Sheppard at St Martins and W. H. Elliott.

Controversy was forbidden, either between Christians or between Christians and non-Christians. The emphasis was on ‘the mainstream’. Roman Catholic Mass was for long excluded, and so were Christian Scientists, the Witnesses, Unitarians and the more enthusiastic evangelists. Moreover, during the war Christian pacifist opinion was banned, which affected many of the most successful broadcasters, like Donald Soper. The staple diet was bland and hymnodic.

The men who were Directors of Religious Broadcasting were significant figures. James Welch in particular was a powerful influence during his Directorship from 1939–46. He was involved in the long gestation of the BBC Hymn Book. He would also have been prepared for controversy had the Churches been willing to allow it. He certainly achieved controversy of one kind by the breaking of the stained glass image of Jesus, in Dorothy Sayers’
“The Man Born to be King”. The argument over Dorothy Sayers’ play focussed on the impersonation of Christ, the inclusion of extra-biblical dialogue and the modernization of language.

Dr Wolfe has a chapter on ‘The Christian Monopoly at Risk 1945–1951’ followed by another headed ‘Pressure on the Christian Cartel’. The detailed story of the breaking of the monopoly is infinitely complex, but gradually from the 1950’s onwards controversy came to be accepted and the range of offerings extended. Billy Graham was allowed to preach and Mrs Knight to attack Christianity The character of Sunday was eroded outside ‘the God-slot’. In any case, of course, ‘wireless’ was giving way to T.V.

Dr Wolfe’s book is a piece of superb documentation based on exemplary labour in the archives. As he rightly says, the material touches on many of the issues in the sociology of religion. The difficulty is to pull these issues out of the very detailed narrative. For example, it would be possible from this book to chart the challenge of the secular intelligentsia, the currents of theology and religious sentiment, the tension between mainstreams and other kinds of religion, and the shifting location of the sacred. Clearly the sacred was thinned and narrowed between 1922 and the 1960s. One cannot now imagine the Chapter at Westminster Abbey being worried about the broadcast of a royal wedding in case men in pubs should hear it with their hats on.

Dr Wolfe is probably wise to leave alone the question of how much broadcasting contributed to the diminution of practice. The operative variables cannot be disentangled, though it is true that (apart from a plateau after 1945) practice has declined steadily since the advent of broadcasting. He is also wise to leave alone extensive content-analysis, though that would give us sensitive indices of established religion. Essentially his work is in the field of micro-politics, where it will remain definitive. The context it needs to make full sense is one of broad cultural trends, especially in the thirties, and a comparative analysis of how other cultures managed broadcasting, especially the broadcasting of religion. In particular, there is much sociological mileage to be gained from a comparison between what happened in societies with state churches and the United States. But the important point is that through the scholarship of Dr Wolfe, we now have the materials whereby such a comparison can be made. It is good to know that he is now engaged in bringing the story up-to-date from 1956.

David Martin


The content of this book is well expressed by the sub-title – except that ‘summary’ or ‘outline’ might have been more accurate than ‘study’ if the