

concluding words of Segundo's commentary is 'nothing less than the humanization of humanity in history.'

This book is not easy reading, and one's suspicions might be aroused by the discovery of so much grist to liberationists' mill in the treatment of Paul. Yet the arguments deserve to be examined with the same vigour as they are presented. Furthermore, even though Segundo insists that all theology is contextualised, what is striking is the extent to which he and his study group have clearly felt the impact and challenge of Paul on their contextual assumptions. They came to see that Paul's anthropological key and *ideology* (the means to flesh out values) might have more to offer them within the power structures of Latin America than had Jesus' political key and ideology. To say this, Segundo argues, is not irreverent; the underlying values of Jesus are not questioned, whereas to absolutize the means he adopted to flesh them out is to deny them historical substance.

The universalization of the conflict with Sin in terms of the anthropological key also discloses that the mechanisms of Sin are at work in the poor and the believer as well as in the powerful and the enemies of God, while the final victory of Christ is not to be sought in the verifiable political domain. Such conclusions in no way lessen Segundo's conviction, supported by his reading of Paul, that the world is the setting for God's work to be undertaken in freedom and faith, but they stand firmly in the way of political or social utopianism.

The richness of thought and critical insight in this book make it well worth the effort to absorb. The anthropological key seems able to open many if not all doors into Paul's thought and hence into what faith might mean to any who try to live in faith.

TREVOR WILLIAMS

LIVING WATER: AN ANTHOLOGY OF LETTERS OF DIRECTION edited by Robin Baird-Smith. *Collins*, London 1987. 204pp. £2.95.

One of the prices we have paid for the telephone and modern transport and a lot of post-Conciliar spirituality has been the virtual disappearance of the letter of spiritual direction. Yet, from St Paul onwards, much of the weightiest teaching on the Christian life has started in the form of such letters.

Robin Baird-Smith's anthology is striking for the variety of correspondents in it, ranging from St Paul to Carlo Carretto, and the widely different situations that made them write (the anxieties of nuns, friends facing death and blindness, and Lady Georgiana Morpeth's low spirits, as well as the concerns all sorts of people have had about their prayer-life). Even so, an anthology like this is bound to reflect the personal predilections of the editor. Of the eighty extracts here, about one-fifth come from Antiquity and the middle ages, a third from the 19th and 20th centuries (the 19th-century French sociologist, the Abbé de Tourville, is generously represented), and the remainder from the classical age of the spiritual letter, the two centuries after Trent. St Francis de Sales, Fénelon, and Caussade fill a third of the book.

Has too much space been given to letters written to men and women of a distant culture and age? The editor believes, surely rightly, that because of their wisdom and subject-matter these letters have a certain universal and timeless quality. He has divided them up thematically; some of us will wish that a little more information had been supplied to help us put the letters into context.

Unlike a lot of the spirituality that floods from the presses, nearly all these letters were written to meet concrete human needs, and for this reason this anthology is likely to appeal to many readers who normally steer clear of spirituality.

JOHN ORME MILLS OP