

Many of Syms' arguments are clearly right, especially his attack on the current cult of special church communities. It is easy to sympathise with his decision. But it is surely false to suppose that, for the sake of his integrity, the real person can and somehow must be wholly separated from the role that others give him: or to

assume that the manifest unlikelihood of church reform from within requires withdrawal from the church; or to dismiss organised religion as such. For most people being in the real, messy world demands a more subtle analysis and a more ambivalent resolution.

TONY ARCHER O. P.

TEXT AND INTERPRETATION: STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT PRESENTED TO MATTHEW BLACK edited by E. Best and R. McL. Wilson, *Cambridge University Press, London 1979. pp. xv + 268 £15.00.*

All who have studied theology or rather Divinity – at St Andrews University will be glad that this *festschrift* has been presented to Matthew Black to honour his seventieth birthday. For more than twenty years until his recent retirement he was Principal of St Mary's College in St Andrews as well as editor of *New Testament Studies*. I found him most helpful in his capacity as T. W. Manson's literary executor. His chief contribution to New Testament scholarship has, of course, been in intertestamental studies and on the semitic influence on the New Testament. It is appropriate, then, that many of the contributions to this collection should be on textual criticism and philology, these include papers by Kurt Aland, C. K. Barrett, Ernest Best, F. F. Bruce, Nils Dahl, Joseph Fitzmeyer, Bruce Metzger, Harald Riesenfeld and R. McL. Wilson. Most of these papers are on detailed technical matters which will restrict the readership, and coupled with the price is likely

to prevent the book being a best-seller. The most interesting papers tend to be those on broader theological themes: an extension of the Son of Man discussion by Morna Hooker, a brief investigation of the presuppositions involved in research into the use of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament by Max Wilcox, the relationship between Jesus and "the messianic prophets" of Josephus by David Hill, and the relationship of I John and the opponents of that author to the Fourth Gospel by Raymond Brown. Not then a major contribution to New Testament scholarship but a collection of some interesting papers and a notable tribute to Matthew Black's invaluable work in a long career. I should add that there is also a bibliography of Professor Black's writings from 1968 to 1977 which supplements the list in *Neotestamentica et Semitica*, edited by E. F. Ellis and M. Wilcox, Edinburgh 1969.

GEOFFREY TURNER

RICH CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF HUNGER by Ronald J. Sider. *Hodder paperback. (copyright 1977 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of USA) £1.00.*

It is paradoxical that while many individual evangelicals have shown great practical concern for the removal of social abuses, evangelicalism has not found it easy to develop a rationale for 'Christian' action in the 'secular' sphere. Evangelical social reformers may have *felt* a congruence between their faith and their social programmes: they have hardly theologised about that congruence; nor have they, for all their attacks on particular abuses, developed a theological position from which one could make an overall criticism of the sort of society which tolerates slavery,

child labour etc.

In recent decades, however, several evangelicals have been becoming dissatisfied with an understanding of the gospel which fails to see an intrinsic connection between good news and just society. It seems that Ronald J. Sider is one of these.

There are three parts to his book: an analysis, with easily-presented statistical tables, of the economic imbalance between richer and poorer countries (and between the richer and poorer sections of many countries). Particularly startling are the figures on development

aid from the various developed countries as a percentage of their respective GNP: they are startling not only because of the tiny pittance which the benevolent rich deign to dole out, but because they indicate the slender percentage of *that* aid which goes to the poorest countries because of the arbitrary nature of the choice of recipients.

Part 2, which the author sees as the most important, gives 'A Biblical perspective on the poor and possessions'; the biblical data are taken very much at their face value, as one would expect from a conservative evangelical; but they're also taken seriously, without the sort of explaining away which evangelicals who are conservative normally resort to. For instance, the 'jubilee principle' as in Lev. 25: 10-24, whereby God ... gave his people a law which would equalize land ownership every fifty years' is pointed out as an institution (whether historically realized or not) which flies in the face of unlimited-and-irreversible-profit-motive economics.

The chapter in which the jubilee principle is discussed reveals a certain problem which evangelicals tend to have about Church and World and the relating of biblical ethics to modern life: given that the Church is the new people of God; do biblical laws apply to the human community at large? Are Christians to practise justice merely within the Church (that wouldn't be bad for starters ...), or are

they to insist on its practice throughout the 'secular' world? Catholics may be puzzled that such a problem arises for evangelicals, but in fact it does. (And of course there are plenty of Catholics who will roundly assert that politics and religion don't mix - except where specific issues like abortion or denominational schooling are on the agenda.) Sider's answer in his last chapter is to point out that 'the biblical authors did not hesitate to apply revealed norms to ... societies outside the people of God'. And 'social structures do exert a powerful influence on saint and sinner alike'. Therefore, 'Christians ... should exercise political influence to implement change in society at large'. (p. 180)

The third part of the book, from which those questions are taken, contains various suggestions for Christian response to the economic and biblical data presented in parts 1 and 2. There is a stress on the Church becoming much more visibly a community, with the members supporting each other in a thrust towards a simpler life-style. And there is a list of American (and, in an appendix, British) pressure-groups which work for non-violent change in national and international structures.

The author is not a marxist, though he's not out to labour that point. But the implications of this book are revolutionary - for the Church and for the world at large.

COLIN CARR O.P.

A HISTORY OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY 1950-1975 by Adrian Hastings. Cambridge University Press. £15.00 and paperback £4.95.

Adrian Hastings' distinguished history of African Christianity covers Catholicism, Protestantism and Independency south of the Sahara since 1950. After a penetrating survey of the predominantly colonial Africa of 1950, he divides the dissolution of that Africa into three periods: 1951-58, 1959-66, and 1967-75. He discusses the history of these periods in terms of separate sections on Church and State, the Historic Churches, and African Independency. So much has happened in Africa in the past thirty years that it is hardly surprising if he occasionally sounds out of breath, but his style is lucid, his approach irenic, and his bibliographical support immense. The inevitably compact, episodic treatment is bound to leave room for argument

about specific cases: his various references to the Bantu Catholic Jamaa movement in Zaire, for example, don't leave quite the same impression as one might obtain from Willy de Craemer's fascinating *The Jamaa and the Church* (1977) - which, of course, he has read. But overall, this is a brilliantly designed picture of change, decay and growth. His broad outline of what has happened stresses the expansion of 'village Christianity' in contrast to 'mission Christianity', and the declining importance of African Independency as an alternative to the mission churches. With this has gone a shift, taking Africa as a whole, in the Catholic-Protestant balance, in favour of Catholicism, and this not just in numbers, but in terms of intellectual and polit-