

completely into the deeper tensions of a complex personality. Saint Anselm has recently had his Southern; Saint Augustine still awaits his. Meanwhile we have much for which to be grateful to Mr Bonner.

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS, by Joachim Jeremias; SCM Press, New Testament Library, 30s.

'Back to the historical Jesus!' This liberal Protestant cry of about the turn of the century is, fortunately, little heard today. It is now generally recognised that our approach to the Jesus of history can only be made through the living tradition of faith and prayer, and even the theological interpretations, of the early Church. But even today there are still some gospel commentators who, after conceding this principle, go on to give the impression that the interval between the ascension and the final writing of the four gospels was a period in which the first generation or two of Christians simply lost touch with the historical source of their faith. Only early source-documents are to be treated seriously; all else is 'embroidery' by the primitive Christian community. Books by commentators of this type may read rather like mathematical treatises, concerned primarily with the manipulations of 'material' long dead. A common, over-simplified and usually devotional reaction to this treatment has been a too-rigid stand on the letter of Holy Writ and a refusal to countenance any scientific analysis aimed at showing how the sacred text evolved and took its shape. The text is inspired, and that is enough. Why subject what is sacred to the profane processes of human scientific investigation? Subscribers to this latter error (as also scholars who have not quite grasped the importance for biblical theology of the process of salvation-history by which God reveals himself in time) are still basing conclusions about the meaning of scripture on an uncritical comparison of texts taken from divergent sources, presumably in the conviction that since the same Holy Spirit is the author of the whole Bible it does not matter. In other words, bad exegesis and biblical theology is still being produced, due to neglect of the fact that the Spirit works from within the true human freedom of many individual persons placed in widely varying circumstances. Of all scripture, it is the gospels which seem to be worst afflicted at the hands of those who tend towards either of these two extremes. There are not a great many studies available in English that are successful in avoiding them both, while yet making a substantial and positive contribution to our true understanding of the gospel message. Of those that there are, the book under review is certainly in the first rank of importance.

The reason for this is partly, of course, that Jeremias brings to bear on the parables all the brilliance of his scholarly insight, and that he builds with discerning selectivity upon the work of others before him. (He frequently quotes C. H. Dodd, for example, though he takes account of the one-sided nature of Dodd's conception of the kingdom; cf. pp. 7, 21, 230.) But equally significant for the

value of Jeremias' study is his recognition that both Jesus' actual preaching and the final written form given to it by the early Church are the vital concern of Christianity today. He might have added, indeed, that the whole inspired process by which the Church was led from one stage to another in the formation of the New Testament writings was, insofar as we have the power to discover it, a divine revelation to us. This was a process of salvation-history. In both Testaments it is the story of the developing religious consciousness of the People of God that has produced our Bible and is set down for our instruction. Jeremias tells us (p. 113): 'The parables have a two-fold historical setting. First, the original historical setting, not only of the parables, but of all the sayings of Jesus, is their original concrete situation in the activity of Jesus. Then, secondly, they went on to live in the primitive Church'. It is this 'life' of the developing traditions concerning Jesus in the early Church which is still thought relatively unimportant by some writers. Others, on the other hand, still fail to see the enrichment to be gained if we can only deepen our penetration of the gospel message by re-discovering a little the actual living voice of our Lord. It is Jeremias' achievement that he succeeds in doing just this 'in some measure here and there', as he modestly puts it.

Although Professor Jeremias is not a Catholic, there seems to me to be nothing in his book (with the minor exception of a single sentence on p. 186 containing a curious *non sequitur* about purgatory) that would be likely to prevent its being accorded an *imprimatur*. Those who know the earlier English edition of this work will find that the present translation, taken from the sixth German edition, 1962, is expanded by over a quarter in length. It is improved in many ways, most notably by the consideration, alongside the synoptic material, of parables appearing in the Gospel of Thomas. The recent discovery of this distinctive collection of Jesus' sayings has now added weight to Jeremias' earlier conclusions. The first half of his book he devotes to a study of the text to show the various ways in which the parables were accommodated to the varying needs and circumstances of the growing apostolic Church. At the conclusion of this part he is in a position to formulate ten laws that appear to have governed the parables' transformation. These laws allow, for example, for the Church's altered situation caused by the rise of missionary and catechetical needs, and the delay of Christ's expected return in glory. Parables originally addressed to hostile Jewish leaders, or to a crowd wavering in doubt concerning Jesus, now receive a different emphasis by being addressed to disciples in need of instruction, or else by allegorizing expansions and interpretations, or again by generalizing moral conclusions. In the book's second half the ten 'laws of transformation' are applied to an analysis of the parables, taken one by one. At this stage Jeremias adds abundant details from his knowledge of the circumstances of contemporary life in Palestine. The result is that the parables shine out now, in colours richer than those to which we have become accustomed, with the simple immediacy of Jesus' preaching. He taught, as is well known, not in theological terms, but in the established language of symbols. His message, less moralizing than designed to

shock his hearers into a realization of impending crisis, confronts them in the first place with the pressing need to come to a decision about his person and mission. Many of the parables justify Jesus' approach to despised sinners and 'irredeemable' outcasts rather than to the self-righteously devout and respectable. Others point the gaze towards God's inexhaustible love, discovery of which evokes an overpowering joy and love in Jesus' disciples. All the parables compel his hearers to come urgently to a decision; the hour of fulfilment has come and the Saviour, sent by God in his boundless goodness, now stands in their midst.

Nothing of our cherished interpretation of Jesus' teaching has been taken away by this book. But a new emphasis in it has been illumined for us, a new contact with the living Lord. Many tired Sunday sermons should now draw a breath of new life.

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THE VARIETY OF CATHOLIC ATTITUDES, by Theodore Westow; Burns & Oates, 13s. 6d.; Herder & Herder, \$3.50.

In discussing the variety of Catholic attitudes Mr Westow has done the English Church an immense service. Bearing this in mind I should like to begin by pointing to one or two very minor shortcomings in the book before I consider its real value. First I think it is a matter of regret that either Mr Westow or his publishers have decided to dress the book in the trappings of scholarship. This work, above all, is intended for the 'average intelligent layman'. Such a person picking this book up in a bookshop might well be put off if he catches sight of the lengthy footnotes. Or again, should he chance to glance through it and light upon pages 57 to 58 he will be justly startled to find a lengthy sentence in German. I feel that this kind of thing will put off considerable numbers of people who really ought to read the book.

In addition I find some of Mr Westow's explanations a little hard to follow. I am, for example, uncertain quite what the author intends on pages 88 to 89 when he suggests that an action by a prominent churchman, or churchmen, should not be described as an action of the Church. 'A pope sends congratulations to Franco, so "the Church" supports Franco. The Spanish Inquisition tortured uneducated men and women, so "the Church" tortures as a means of conversion. A priest refuses an Irish peasant the Easter Communion because he only puts half-a-crown in the Easter collection, so "the Church" is greedy.'

The author objects that this is a 'cheap' use of the word, but I think it not unreasonable to say that there is a very strong case for using the word 'Church' in this connection which might be based on similar arguments to those the author uses in order to suggest that one should not use it thus. It is frequently true that Catholics and others falsely identify the Church with a given pope, or certain bishops, even in some cases particular priests. But I do not think it possible to