

If only the writer troubled to discuss contrary opinions! But, having silenced the opposition to his majesty, he quotes only those authors tending in the same direction as his thesis, taking for preference material from Loisy, Dibelius, or Bultmann, systematically ignoring less radical articles such as those of Jeremias, or the work which is an authority on the subject, that of Blinzler? How can one escape from the feeling that in Dr Winter's eyes the dispute has been decided in advance? The Jews had no hand in the death of Jesus, except in so far as Pilate forced them into it.

We say this with even more regret in that a dialogue with the late Jules Isaac (for example, *Problèmes de la Passion d'après deux études récentes* in *Revue Historique*, 459, (1961), 119-138, and in the last little book he wrote before his death *L'enseignement du mépris*, Paris 1962) could usefully have been entered into. There are many of us who wish that the anti-semitic mentality, so deeply contrary to the Christian faith, should disappear. But one must use the right methods; if it is to be scientific a work should widen the literary enquiry and refute contrary opinions, those of a Blinzler, for example, point by point. Otherwise it is an appeal *pro domo* which at this time deserts the common cause of the fight against anti-semitism.

X. LÉON-DUFOUR

THE MEN AND MESSAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, by Peter F. Ellis, C.S.S.R.; Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, n.p.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, by Ignatius Hunt, O.S.B.; Gill and Son, 18s.

A GUIDE TO READING THE BIBLE (2), by Daniel E. Lupton; Sheed and Ward (Canterbury Books), 11s. 6d.

Father Ellis clearly longs to encourage and help people to become thoroughly familiar with the scriptures. So it is distressing to have to say that the resulting book is extremely dull, despite its very attractive appearance and the useful diagrams it contains (including a splendid 'Panorama of Biblical History' inside the back cover, which one longs to see pinned up along a class-room wall: obtainable, it seems, from *Editions de l'École*, 11, Rue de Sèvres, Paris). I cannot imagine anyone, having made full use of this book to guide him through the Old Testament, failing to feel that all he has done is to inflict upon himself a heavy burden of unenlightening reading in addition to the already heavy burden of the scriptures themselves. It would be quite unfair to accuse Fr Ellis of fundamentalism: indeed, he is as anxious as anyone else to cure the common reader of this disease. But fundamentalism seems to cling and clog in unexpected places. His book, for instance, contains a discussion of 'the historical character of Gen. 1-11' which, while clearly and unmistakably part of a larger section on the Yahwist author, gives as evidence for the 'intention of the author to write history' a series of references to the 'These are the generations of . . .' verses. Yet only thirty pages earlier we find page after page given up to a multi-

coloured chart analysing the text of the Pentateuch into its four sources (another of the useful diagrams, though inevitably giving an impression of much more hard-and-fast certainty in the cutting-up process than is often possible). A quick glance at these rainbow-like pages is enough to remind us (if we need it) that each of the verses listed as evidence of the Yahwist writer's historical intentions actually belong to P. An author sometimes fails by not having read someone else's book; it seems odd to get the impression that he has not read his own. Is it that anything tending more towards the historicist side of any question is automatically a 'safer' position? Left-over fears of Roman reaction producing left-over rags of fundamentalism? Fr Ellis actually presents himself as ready to go into reverse on the unitary authorship of the book of Isaiah, if the Biblical Commission merely gives the word. This strikes me as, amongst other things, an insult to the Biblical Commission.

As a cure for fundamentalism, *Understanding the Bible* is certainly a better choice than Fr Ellis's book, as well as being much shorter. It is true that if you are even moderately sensitive in matters of style and vocabulary, you will find it almost too painful to read ('epical'. . . 'doubtlessly'. . . 'departees'; and meaningless padding too abundant to quote). But if you know anyone who is not so sensitive, and who needs to be introduced to such startling conclusions as that 'Cain and Abel are *not the immediate* sons of First Man and First Woman' (author's italics: he uses them freely), or that the Reed Sea, not Red Sea, was about waist-deep, then this book will probably do him good rather than harm. I confess I cannot see that it gives anything much besides negative demolition of fundamentalism (except for the welcome reassurance that any serious reader should feel free to use those non-Catholic English versions now available which are superior in scholarship to anything as yet provided by Catholics). I do not think that a reader of *Understanding the Bible* would put it down with any sense of having grasped the idea of salvation history. It would be unfair, of course, to expect anything illuminating on inspiration. And by the end of the chapter on inerrancy, what you realise is that the only way to distinguish between 'material' and 'formal' statements in the Bible is to discover an error: then you know that it was 'only material'. There is no other sure way of telling.

I cannot refrain from recording my impression, received not only from these two books but in the course of almost all such reading, that continual encouragement to the common view that Catholics are incapable of intellectual honesty must be given by the habit of talking as though no decision of the Biblical Commission could ever have been really and thoroughly mistaken; while at the same time continuing (as, of course, must be done) to expound, e.g., two of the positions explicitly condemned in reply No. 2 of June 1909.

The only thing I want to say about Daniel Lupton's book is that it seems to me the ideal guide for any non-specialist study-group wanting to do some real work on the New Testament. Anyone capable of reading the New Testament at all is also capable of working through this book: it demands no more than ordinary literacy. At the same time it does call for, and facilitate, real work.

It starts from oral gospel (Acts discourses) and then intersperses epistles with gospels (not chronologically) in what I think is likely to be the best possible way of overcoming the 'can't-get-through-it' feeling that chokes off many perfectly willing people who are simply not much used to serious reading. By the end, the student will have read the greater part of the New Testament, though there will still be a great deal of St Paul awaiting his efforts; but by that time, he will probably be very willing to go ahead on his own.

C. HASTINGS

THE RIGHT TO LIFE, by Norman St John-Stevas; Hodder and Stoughton, 2s. 6d.

This small paperback is concerned largely with the legal-cum-Christian attitude to killing people that forms the general current of opinion in the West about this problem. Murder, suicide, euthanasia, warfare and abortion are all dealt with simply and clearly. The trouble is that 'dealt with' seems to be the right phrase. Traditional Christian moral positions are stated with admirable clarity, and those who were in any doubt as to what Christians in general thought about killing will no doubt find the book valuable. But the whole work reads rather like a digest of a text-book of moral theology. Mr St John-Stevas' legal preoccupations show through on every page. It would be absurd to deny the truth of much of what he is saying, but equally the negative way in which it is said robs a Christian statement of its charity, and almost of its validity. The moral theologian of the recent past having produced his network of prohibitions, proceeds to evolve a highly complex casuistry to allow for the 'hard cases'. That this is a truncated and malformed approach to the whole question of Christian morality is now being widely accepted. It is therefore unfortunate that *The Right to Life* gives no glimmering of this in its discussion of acute moral difficulties. Here the Christian has it all cut and very dried.

There is the customary tired defence of nuclear weapons as deterrents, together with the accompanying condemnation of actually using them. This is no place to enter into that discussion again, but it is worth pointing out that Mr St John-Stevas accepts Pius XII's condemnation of indiscriminate killing (p. 120) and John XXIII's attack on war (p. 125) as an instrument of justice, but appears to regard the dropping of atomic bombs 'on enemy cities only' (p. 119) as a legitimate use of nuclear weapons. Here is morality gone badly astray.

In the chapter on warfare there is a truly astonishing passage on non-violent resistance, in which the author describes this policy as a counsel of perfection which men are 'not bound to emulate'. (p. 115). It seems we are commanded to be 'perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect' but counsels of perfection do not have any binding force. Here again is an example of the confused thinking of the moral text-book writers.

I have been disappointed in this book because the author is too eminent and too capable to produce anything as sad as this. I suspect it was written with only