

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.

ROBERT SHARP, O.P.

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

dissociate certain actions from the Church in such a way as to suggest that these actions belong *only* to individuals. It seems to me simply dishonest to say that 'the Spanish Inquisition tortured uneducated men and women' but to insist that the Spanish Inquisition is so far not to be identified with the Church that there is no reasonable way in which one can call this the action of the Church and so on. Hans Küng has covered this ground extremely well and I am sure that Mr Westow basically agrees with him.

Having got my minor carps out of the way I want now to consider for a short space just what it is that Mr Westow has done for us. We are accustomed to thinking of ourselves as members of the Christian Church. Precisely what we make of this depends upon our degree of integration into, and understanding of the Church. But any kind of understanding is bound to be informed by the emotional and intellectual attitudes to which we have been bred. Many of these will constitute valuable insights into the Church for us, but others are merely the blindnesses of our time and situation. It is these that we must overcome. In order to make clear just how this process of conditioning has worked in the Christian community the author gives a concise and very valuable historical survey of past Christian ways of looking at themselves, and their world. Clearly such a survey, in a book of this size, has to be highly selective, but it would be hard for anyone to deny that the account is not only fair, but extremely illuminating. What he is concerned to illustrate is the constant tension between the idea of the Church as a community and that of the importance of the individual.

Mr Westow feels, and clearly he is right about this, that the primitive Christian understanding of the perfection of the individual within and through the community has been swamped and very nearly destroyed today by an excessive individualism. It is not enough, however, merely to condemn this 'attitude': in order to combat it we must understand its origins, and also grasp the germ of truth hidden in its excesses. Any disagreement one might have with small details of Mr Westow's argument can in no way affect its total excellence.

The book is pleasantly written and is precisely the kind of thing we all ought to read if we really want the *nouvelle vague* to wash over England. If this book has the success it deserves then English Catholic jingoism will be firmly on its way out.

NEIL MIDDLETON

THE MAKING OF A CHRISTIAN, by Charles Davis; Sheed and Ward, 8s. 6d.

Charles Davis' latest book is concerned to provide a critical interpretation of baptism and confirmation, and in doing so to return them to their true status as central and splendid events in Christian culture. As usual with Fr Davis, the theological exploration is controlled by a pastoral concern, the felt need to re-fruit an impoverished Christian community deprived of its own meanings, to make baptism something more than a fumbling around the font in a remote corner of the church, and confirmation more than a mere interior strengthening. Much of