

serious weakness of the book. There is practically nothing on Johannine criticism, and no reference to textual criticism or source criticism.

The Jewish background to New Testament study figures prominently, but no connection is drawn between this and the chapter on Jesus, the complacent anti-Bultmannianism of which emerges from its title, "How much history do we need?" There are only two inconsequential pages in that chapter on Jesus' self-understanding. On the Hellenistic side, the author heralds a revolution in New Testament criticism in the wake of the discoveries at Nag Hammadi, but his prophetic powers desert him when it comes to specifying exactly the direction of the much vaunted new development.

There are, appropriately, chapters devoted to sociological method and the study of linguistic symbolism; in both areas much more could have been said if the net had been cast more widely.

The chapter most likely to interest – and perhaps also to irritate – readers of *New Blackfriars* – is the shortest, "The Apostolic Book and the Apostolic See". The author expresses his Protestant surprise at 'the sudden emergence of Roman Catholics into the front rank of biblical scholars since the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII. In his account

of the modernist crisis, he chooses to ignore those scholars who, loyal to the Holy See, nevertheless went on producing under considerable strain, distinguished New Testament work. And his review of more recent work is an exclusively transatlantic paean of the Roman Catholic contribution. He seems not to know of the European greats, Schnackenburg, Schürmann, Dupont, not forgetting Schillebeeckx, to name but a few. The undercurrent of patronising approval in Henry's account appears to be decidedly out of date. The truth is that one of the clearest of the 'new directions in New Testament study' is that confessional distinctions between the practitioners of it are no longer relevant. More to the point would have been a chapter on the newly emerging isolationist group of fundamentalists, of whatever church allegiance, who do not accept the historical critical method.

The book is entertainingly written; bon mots and more or less appropriate anecdotes abound. But the author lapses frequently into journalese, skates over all the more complex exegetical questions, and has produced an even more ephemeral book than the subject required.

JOHN MUDDIMAN

**A THEOLOGY FOR A NEW HUMANITY** by Juan Luis Segundo S.J. and others:  
Vol 1 'The Community called Church' pp 172. Vol 2 'Grace and the Human Condition' pp 214. Vol 3 'Our Idea of God' pp 204. Vol 4 'The Sacraments Today' pp 154.  
Vol 5 'Evolution and Guilt' pp 148. Gill & Macmillan, £4.50 each, paperback.

Fr Segundo and his colleagues at the Peter Faber Pastoral Centre in Montevideo have produced some orderly volumes. Each question proceeds according to a statement of 'essential aspects', followed by 'clarifications and concrete applications', then by a treatment of some important detail, and lastly there are sets of notes and biblical references. All this is set forth in quite ugly phrases. At the start, for example, we are told in frightful operese that faith is now 'fraught with anguish', and, in a worse slang, that faith seems now 'incompatible with interpersonal relations' because 'we have reached a point in time when humanity has definit-

ively entered an era when acceleration is a permanent, constituent element of man's history'. Alas for modernity and the South American situation, all this may sound very like Tennyson's doubting, like Newman's being cut in an Oxford lane, and like Westcott puffing to Hart: 'How rapidly things move now'. But no. 'The faith of our contemporaries is a *faith-in-crisis* in the fullest and noblest sense of that phrase.' We are true revolutionaries. We feel 'a need not only to proclaim equality and fraternity, but also to achieve those goals in practice'. So 'here we find one of the differences with (sic) the apologetics of the nineteenth century'.

Then, Christians 'tried to show people in some way that the Bible was right'. Now we have other things to say. 'A world growing up presents new questions as a new type of human being emerges.'

New questions require a new theology. A reductive theology. 'We do not spell out all the atavisms of a doctrine laden with the accumulations of twenty centuries.' Though, of course, still an orthodox theology. 'This does not mean that the issues about the Church not treated here are considered less important or less certain'. It is simply that somehow they did not come up in conversation at the holiday weekend seminars of which these volumes are a record.

At these seminars it was agreed that Christians must see themselves as a minority group. Paul 'felt obliged to acknowledge the smallness and insignificance of the nascent Church', and 'that situation does not seem to have changed very much in the past twenty centuries'. But then, incarnation implies limitation. Christ was, we all know, a single white man; Paul, again, was probably a short stocky person and the local bishop is unlikely to be outstandingly handsome. So if the Church is 'universal' it must be in significance rather than in size: 'we can reiterate here the phrase of Pius XII, giving it perhaps a deeper inflection: "Men were not made for the Church; the Church was made for men".' There is here a nice example of Fr Segundo's resource in finding papal statements from the past that, if given perhaps a deeper inflection, will assist his argument. And he can inflect Scripture too, if there be need. At the End, he declares, all will be asked 'what have you done to my brother?'

There is a great deal of eschatological information in these volumes. Fr Segundo thinks Jesus is particularly interested in automobiles and babies. He likes small cars. He likes any baby. 'My choice of a Japanese car may allow a child to be born', (Vol 1 p 101). Sometimes things are more difficult yet. Spouses 'may have to choose between an automobile and a baby', (Vol 2 p 26). There is a great deal of gnostic wisdom also. Though all will be asked about the brothers, only the pagan will be surprised. 'The Christian is he *who already knows*. This, undoubtedly is what distinguishes and defines him'. he is privy to 'the

secret of what is happening in human history'. 'The Christian is not the only one to enter into this plan. But he is the one who knows it'. Not even an inflection here of that reversal when 'I shall know even as I am known'.

Eschatology, yes. Heaven and Hell, no. 'These images were overly infantile'. We are to prefer the new description of old heaven that it 'situates on the plane of the absolute all that we have done freely out of love'. Despite such talk, we may find here a more hopeful entrance upon Fr Segundo's enterprise. He is insistent that the Church be recognisably the sphere of such free love. Thus will the Church be significant for the race.

Such a significance is not easily to be won. We must entertain a radical criticism not only of the Church's capitalist association with the powerful of this world, not only of the appeasement theology South Americans have 'heard all their life from the pulpit', but of our very notion of God. God is disclosed in his activity, in what the manualists called the 'missions' of the Persons in history. God is disclosed in Jesus. We do not need to seek the Absolute outside our human condition. As the bishops declared at Medellín, 'in man we encounter God'. But, says Fr Segundo if we do not see man in manufactured goods we shall not be able to see God in his universe. We have to make society a glass of vision. Only as we perfect our society shall we come to appreciate that Jesus is revealing 'God who is a society'.

We have first to meditate long upon our alienation. Here Fr Segundo pauses critically to view Bultmann's rush into the assumption that 'modern man' is the touchstone of what is possible. Here he is almost Barthian. He pauses to view others. 'People are too quick to raise the final question: when all is said and done, what does this contribute to my social, political, and economic activity?' He is more aware of the precise mistake made by Pelagius than many patrologists. He will have nothing of a theology in which Law commands good deeds, and salvation is the reward for the surrender of our liberty. True liberty, and here Fr Segundo, as his tone betrays, relies upon the investigations of Professor Rahner, is that condition when nature is at the disposition of the person whose innermost desire is for good. Such a condition

is not readily attainable. It is easier to be natural than to be personal.

All this is rather abstract. Fr Segundo's example, by which he hopes to make things plainer, is disappointingly old hat. Like many theologians of the earlier schools, he talks of love between husband and wife, of love 'with its incessant demands for fresh creativity and deeper intimacy'. of love which will be an expression of liberty, and he talks of human weakness in the face of these incessant demands, of 'homey comfort' and of how 'an automobile can often be used to replace the costly effort at deeper understanding'.

After such stuff it is a relief, perhaps, when the discussion is shifted into a more public matter. Like Freud, says Fr Segundo, invoking one nineteenth century disturber of the peace as a stalking horse for another such, Paul 'sees the inner man as truly real only when he can externalize his intentions in concrete fulfilments', so 'man's liberation must necessarily involve his conscious realisation of the unconscious determinisms that surround him'. In short, 'it is concretized in ideological transformation and political action'. We are enabled to act in liberty by God's gift of his own life. The Church receives grace for the world.

This is a theology in which Teilhard de Chardin is raised for our admiration and Francis Borgia is depressed. Indeed the pedestals of all canonised saints are a little diminished. 'A community which claims to be wholly in dialogue with the world and its history must renounce the tack of delegating to *saints* its task of being saintly as a whole in the multiple, concrete and fallible commitments of its members that are motivated by love'. But the priest has his value. As Che Guevara denied himself particular loves for love of the people, so the celibate priest must deny the world its hostages, and devote himself for the people. The priest must be the man of the future society. A little inflecting is necessary here. Vatican II may have said 'Earth progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's Kingdom', (*Gaudium et Spes*, 39), but at Medellín the South American bishops put it better when they declared that history confronted Christians, with the challenge to commit themselves to liberation and humanisa-

tion', and that 'we are returning to the biblical form wherein the people of Israel recognised the presence of God in their very experience of liberation'. Fr Segundo comments nicely that the Medellín says more to him than Vatican II does. But he has a criticism of the Medellín bishops which properly accords with his radical demand for a significant Church. And with his criticism of Pelagius. The bishops did not see the need for a liberation in man's relations with God. 'In man evolution reaches the point where it is handed over to the initiative, energy and free, conscious orientation of this being who proceeds from it'. By accepting this grace, taking this initiative, we grow in the sight of men and of God. 'Salvation is a "political" maturity'.

Upward and onward, then. And Sin? Original Sin? Is all to be overtaken by some evolutionary hypothesis? Well, yes. We must not take the Fall for an event at the start of our history. Such a theory allows men to speak as if somehow there will always be oppression 'in the nature of things', and as if the Church, as the President of Brasil recently remarked to the Pope, should always be ready to 'console the afflicted'. Rather, sin should be understood in the dialectic of God's liberative plan for human history. Christ is there at the Fall, 'for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth', (Colossians 1:16). Christ, the Word who launched the whole universe towards liberty, gives human beings power to break up earlier worlds that have become repetitiveness and death. We move towards liberation not as exiles from a Paradise but as human beings dealing with the negentropy of sin in our universe.

Fr Segundo and his fellows have constructed an impressive account of our existence before God. In their beginning is their end. The creative minority is perfectly revealed as the *locus* of the life force. As evolution in God's biological order proceeds through the select few, so through the few of the Church the race may realise a richer social order. It is a splendid vision he affords us. And perhaps it may include, when all he desires is brought to its social End, some hint of music, of art, of human letters, even, perhaps, some more elegant version of these seminar texts, so that a lovelier recognition may be given to 'God who is a society'.

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