

In any case, it is not constructive, it does not contribute to the building up of the body, to work out such frustrations in public, without first subjecting them to close criticism in private. It is on the contrary a contribution to building up Babel. One of those earlier reviewers, quoted on the back of the book, wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement*,

“Peter De Rosa has a fire in his belly, and the power of it sweeps the reader along with him”.

Yes, demons do generate fire, and in the belly. And that accounts, no doubt, for the swirling smoke in the head.

Reply to Edmund Hill

Peter De Rosa

The Editor of *New Blackfriars* has sent me an advance copy of Edmund Hill's review-article on my JESUS WHO BECAME CHRIST (JWBC) in case I should care to answer it. This reminds me of a judge who said: 'Prisoner at the bar, you are about to be hanged but afterwards you will of course have the right of reply.

In fact, I feel honoured that a book written so many years ago should be the object of Fr. Hill's crusade both here and abroad and merit eight pages of a journal in 1978. I mean it truly when I say the reviewer gave me immense pleasure and not a little harmless amusement. I would prefer him to have left out certain innuendoes, as when he refers, somewhat unkindly I think, to my religious affiliation and when he says I could have been 'just a little more honest'. But, for the most part, his rope tickled my neck so nicely I hardly felt it snap.

Since the Editor has allowed me a speech from the grave, I should like to draw attention to a puzzle with regard to JWBC which, try as I may, I am unable to resolve. It is this. To my knowledge, I never had a good review of that book by any Catholic priest and never a bad one by any other reviewer.

Fr. Hill's review contains phrases like De Rosa's *simplisme*, *confusion of ideas*, *irresponsibility*, his book is *junk*, contains *heresy but not very much*, he is a *demon with swirling smoke in his head* and is *very offensive*. Phrases certainly not permitted today in criticism of non-Catholics, at least not in such Christian abundance. Still, mild when compared with other priest reviewers.

Non-Catholic scholars, by contrast, have praised the book so lavishly that I cannot for the life of me take them very seriously. A few examples. William Barclay, while admitting he is less radical than I, calls me 'a scholar on his knees' and declares:

“Whoever reads this book will rise from the reading of it with fuller knowledge of Jesus himself”.

Canon Michael Green, an Evangelical theologian, after saying it is

hard to improve on Barclay's evaluation, chose it as his Book of the Year. 'The book itself,' he writes,

'is the most moving and beautiful, the most devotional and consistent, the most scriptural and sensitive working out of the radical position I have ever read.'

Many other scholars like Bishop Barry are equally enthusiastic.

I have not quoted any reviewer in order to voice agreement or disagreement. That role is the reader's. I am simply baffled by the strange division among reviewers not only of opinion but of the parties holding the opinion. It was never my intention to become a barrier to ecumenism between priests and non-priests.

One last curiosity: no priest reviewer thought fit to mention the word 'scholarship'. no other reviewer forgot to mention it.

Enough said. Now I can let my tired old theological bones rest underground till Resurrection day. Unless, of course, some other editor asks for an exhumation order to have me hanged again. That will really worry me. Men hanged too often have a nasty habit of being given in the end a pedestal on which to rest their feet.

Giving Away Power

Dick Lobel

In this article I want to enter the Christian-Marxist debate in *New Blackfriars*, but on the terrain of political and economic practice rather than of theory. I want to do this partly because I think that the theoretical debate reached something of an impasse with the challenge thrown down by Francis Barker who, as a follower of Louis Althusser, holds that Christianity, an ideology, is not the epistemological equal of Marxism, a science, but is rather the potential object of that science itself (*New Blackfriars*, September 1976). I think it would be possible to reply to Barker's article—to make a number of possible replies—but would this serve any purpose, when Barker in any case generously concludes:

'A more fruitful unity between Marxism and Christianity will be achieved at the level of political practice. Most Marxists and some Christians find themselves in struggle against capitalism and it is in the exigencies of that struggle that they will find their deepest commitment not only to the revolution but also to each other' (p.424)?

It is exactly on that 'level of political practice' that I want to raise questions and make suggestions—the more so because I fully agree with Barker that to declare oneself in support of 'the revolution of