

labour of the poor.

He also attacks the individualism of this kind of spirituality, its obsession with the interior life, which rendered the virtues (even charity) as harmless intentions or states of mind. What he is offering in place of this "spiritualism and individualism", as suggested by the title, is an understanding of spirituality as the Christian life lived in the light of "encounter with the Lord", not in the comparatively trivial sense of having had some inner experience of Him, but precisely in the life of the Messianic community. But "there is no authentic evangelisation that is not accompanied by action in behalf of the poor". (p. 44) And it is just such action in behalf of the poor that identifies the community as Messianic, as Jesus' works and words for the poor and the needy served to identify Him as the Messiah. (Luke 4:18)

This encounter with the Lord, the life in the community that has made an "option for the poor", is the well from which we drink, the source of our spiritual lives. It is in this spirituality, this way of following Jesus, that the Christian is freed by God's love—freed for a love that is gratuitous, as God's love is gratuitous, and which seeks to "achieve historical efficacy" (p. 112) in solidarity with the poor. It is out of this spiritual journey, made often in much suffering, that "joy springs from the hope that death is not the final word of history". (p. 118)

'there is nothing at all unorthodox about any of this, nor anything particularly new, though Gutierrez' powerful rhetorical style makes exciting reading at times. There is certainly nothing whatsoever in this that Roman officialdom has any reason to find objectionable. It is all supported by frequent references to such authoritative sources as John Paul II, several Encyclicals, the Medellin and Puebla Conferences, Teresa of Avila, Oscar Romero and so on.

One criticism that ought to be made, however, is of a theme that appears occasionally which suggests that the Christian vocation somehow involves *my* becoming aware of *my* rights as a son or daughter of God, rather than becoming aware of the call to service and sacrifice that being a son or daughter implies. If this is what Roman officials find objectionable about liberation theology, then they are right to this extent to question its orthodoxy.

However, though there are passages where Gutierrez does seem to be suggesting this, the view is not central, nor even important, to his thesis. His discussion of gratuitous and liberating love of the poor, on the other hand, puts this sense of "my own rights" firmly in the background where it belongs. "The experience and idea of the gratuitousness of God's love are fundamental and of central importance in the Christian life" (p. 109) and it is precisely from this love that our efficacious love for the poor must flow.

Even if Gutierrez himself does not steer completely clear of insistence on "my rights" in one or two places, the Latin American Church and the liberation movement whose experiences and insights he seeks to articulate are certainly free, for the most part, of this way of thinking. Theirs is a spirituality of service and self-sacrifice, a spirituality that has led many to martyrdom. Even the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops cannot "smash this thing".

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THE WORD OF GOD IN THE ETHICS OF JACQUES ELLUL by David W. Gill.
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No Christian thinker can safely bypass Jacques Ellul, who, having articulated a searching critique of modern social organisation as telling as any in our age, has consistently attempted to show that such a critique belongs, as of right, to Christian theology. But the reader who makes up his mind to begin may well be daunted by the diversity and extent of the Ellul corpus, and not less by the way in which its author characteristically expresses himself. "Hasty and sloppy expression", comments the

sympathetic David Gill, "sometimes contains verbal contradictions uncalled for by the reality being described and yet difficult to detect because part of a torrent of dialectical contradictions". To which less well-disposed critics will add tart observations about the "sustained intemperance" of Ellul's tone. Splenetic and undisciplined, verbose and rhetorical, by turn pious and cynical, Ellul is not a thinker who will ever charm his readers into close attention. Dr. Gill's relaxed and enthusiastic advocacy is, therefore, most welcome. His beer may do more than Milton can to persuade us that systematic social critique is indispensable if Christian social thought is to break out of its prison of platitudes.

The author's interpretative thread is the Word of God—which means both Jesus and the Bible. Like Kierkegaard, Ellul has more than one writing *persona*: he is a detached sociologist and a Biblical expositor, and on several occasions has tried to balance a work of social analysis with a Biblical treatment of the same theme. Two such pairs of works stand at the heart of Dr. Gill's study, one on the character of urban-technological civilisation and the other on politics and the nation state. He prepares for these with chapters on Ellul's conception of the task of Christian ethics and on his account of revelation. Ellul's Barthian inspiration is, as might be expected, in clear view; but Gill's exposition makes much of the immediate debt to Kierkegaard and allows us to see how Ellul never relinquished the question of his youth, to what extent one could be Marxist and Christian at the same time. But behind both Kierkegaard and Marx lies Hegel; and there remains an unexplored question to be followed up about the Hegelian inspiration of Ellul's concept of morality and what seem to be strong anticipations of the neo-hegelian "theology of hope".

Dr. Gill's principal role is as Ellul's expositor. The probing of his subject's thought, which occupies his final chapter, is suggestive rather than definitive, and demands to be taken much further. How does this supreme critic of *la technique* (not "technology", but "technological civilisation" or "technicism") regard the social sciences, from whose platform he launches his analysis but which must, on any account, be somewhere near the heart of the technicist phenomenon? And how does this Barthian with his Christocentric view of knowledge allow himself to speak systematically from two points of view, scientific and theological? If Dr. Gill's study sends us scurrying back to Ellul's pages in search of answers, it will have served us well.

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