

'Realized Eschatology', whose adherents are apparently unconcerned for any decisive future event, but seem to be satisfied with the *Eschaton* in their midst, which they identify with their own institutional Church. The main example of this is the 'Roman Catholic' Church, of which Graham Neville's ideas are so erroneous as to be not worth refuting here. Suffice it to say that we have not yet rejected the Creed, or forgotten that the sacraments are 'pledges of future glory'. That the visible Church could sometimes have paid more regard to the positive building up of the temporal order, in matters of social justice, for example, is no doubt arguable. But despite the importance of working for the fulfilment of God's will on earth and so bringing nearer (in some sense) the last day through the practical exercise of charity, that other clear teaching of scripture which enjoins on us detachment from the world must also not be overlooked. Commandments to 'let those who have wives live as though they had none', and the rest, can no more be disregarded by the Church than can the so-called 'distortions' of apocalyptic expectation. The valid and inspired significance of the latter for the present age between the comings of Christ is that the kingdom of heaven has even now drawn near, with a theological if not a temporal proximity, and that consequently Christians are to be continually prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. The Church is called to be at the same time active in history and contemplative of the perfection of Christ living in her. And so she redeems the time, conscious that in her the Kingdom is fully though invisibly present in the world, as with all creation she eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

Summing up, we can say that the eschatological perspective of this book is in general that of J. A. T. Robinson in his important study, 'Jesus and his Coming', although Graham Neville explicitly disagrees with him in some matters of detail. The book under review is of the nature of a general survey, compared with Robinson's more thorough study. The welcome contribution here is the author's demonstration how the continuity between Jesus' prophecies for the near future and those for the last day is rooted in a similar continuity in the inspired utterances of the prophets.

ROBERT SHARP, O.P.

COME DOWN, ZACCHAEUS, by Solange Hertz; The Newman Press, \$4.50

MEDITATIONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT—WISDOM, by Gaston Brillet, C.O.R.,; Desclée Co., \$3.75

PAGES D'ÉVANGILE, by Ph. Dagonet; Les Éditions du Cerf, 7,50 NF

'It's only sporting to tell you nobody asked me to write it. I just went ahead and wrote it anyway without waiting to be asked, because I got so enthusiastic about the Bible I couldn't control myself any longer. Looking back over what

I've had the temerity to put on paper, I must also tell you this is anything but a textbook for seminarians, but rather a sort of tabloid for people in the world, like me'. The result of Mrs Hertz's uncontrollable enthusiasm, *Come Down, Zacchaeus*, is a highly readable book, written in the raciest American slang, a curious mixture of deep insight into prayer and somewhat jejune generalisation on men, women and the battle of the sexes, very witty and occasionally a little exasperating. It is not a formal introduction to Bible reading but is the author's own reaction to a variety of Bible stories. From some, for instance that of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, she draws out the moral principle and applies it in highly entertaining manner to similar situations in modern life. But with most stories Mrs Hertz concerns herself not with the literal sense, but with typology. Ruth, Judith and Tamar are all taken as allegories illustrating the relationship between God and the soul, especially the soul that has embarked on contemplative prayer. I find myself in emphatic agreement with all that Mrs Hertz has to say about the importance of prayer and share her indignation with those who drive the contemplative out of young children. Her use of allegory is exciting and stimulating but at times her treatment is too individualistic and too artificial. She is too individualistic because she makes the Bible appear to be concerned almost exclusively with the relationship between me and my God instead of between God and his people, and too artificial because her allegories have an almost geometrical precision that is out of place in the more supple world of the semitic parable. And finally I do not think Mrs Hertz distinguishes sufficiently between accommodation and the true spiritual sense which must always be based on the literal sense.

And here it seems is a problem. To understand the literal sense fully 'it is absolutely necessary for the interpreter to go back in spirit to those remote centuries of the East, making proper use of the help afforded by history, archaeology, ethnology and other sciences' (*Divino afflante spiritu*). Must we, poor fools, who have not the time, talent or training for such erudite studies wait in silence for the crumbs that fall from the exegete's table? To a certain extent we must. It is clear that Mrs Hertz has read widely and by no means despises scholarship. But does this mean that her book is a mere rehash of other men's works? No, for she has one great asset. She is, to use her own words, 'just a housewife and rather close to essentials, I guess', a woman that has been courted and married, kept house, conceived, born and reared her children. This is the stuff of most women's lives now and in biblical times and it gives her freshness of approach to many situations that the learned celibate scholar may well miss as he pores over manuscripts and potters round Qumran. For instance, if you have ever been a girl angling for an invitation to a dance, read her entertaining chapter on Ruth.

The second book under review is a very different type. If an Englishman misled by the title, *Meditations on the Old Testament: Wisdom* takes this book to church he will find himself in endless distractions. Each meditation starts with some five verses of the Confraternity Edition quoted in full, but this is followed

by a 'meditative commentary' on about two more chapters of it. It can be quite an amusing game trying to guess what the Confraternity version is, with the help of this book and a Knox or Douay, but hardly conducive to prayer. But even without the difficulty of an unfamiliar text, this is a very dull book. It tries to cover far too much in each meditation. The first section on Job is the best.

Pages d'Évangile is a collection of twenty-five talks given by Père Philippe Dagonet, O.P., during Sunday morning television services. They are neat little sermons, sticking fairly closely to the text and each one dealing with a single incident or parable. The author has a gift for making the Gospel come alive and for showing its relevance to problems today. I felt that Père Dagonet was dogged by the fear that he would not carry his large and varied audience with him if he dared to leave the well beaten track. I think in his last talk, *L'Évangile a changé le monde*, he forgot about his listeners and said what he really wanted to say, and for this reason I found this the most interesting.

SISTER MARY SANDRINA, O.P.

THE EAGLE'S WORD, Gerald Vann, O.P.; Collins, 25s.

St John's gospel is symbolic in language, structure and thought to a greater extent even than the synoptic gospels. If we are able now to explore the Johannine symbolism directly, without scruples at every turn as to whether or not we are endangering the historicity of the gospel, this is, in part, a measure of the success of Lagrange's fundamental defence in his commentary of nearly forty years ago. Fr Vann acknowledges a special debt to Lagrange but the direction of his own commentary (in the long introductory essay that forms half of the book) is quite different: to explore the riches of the gospel symbols against the background both of the Old Testament and of 'the universal imagery of mankind as a whole'. That the first of these is a necessary element in any understanding of St John is acknowledged by all save the most extreme 'hellenizing' commentators, even though too great an emphasis on the sources of St John's thought risks an undervaluation of his own proper genius and achievement. This second background of universal imagery has been largely neglected and one must salute here the pioneer quality of Fr Vann's essay. A certain disquiet may, however, be felt in face of the following statement:

Thus we have to make a triple distinction: the pagan myths and rituals express man's deepest yearnings, his yearning for immortal life and youth; the Old Testament expresses not merely a yearning but a hope, and a hope firmly based on a divine promise; the New Testament shows us the fulfilment of the promise and the hope (and a *a fortiori* of the yearnings) in the person of the Incarnate Word, who lived out the myth-pattern in actual historical fact . . . It is not so much that this statement is untrue as that it is radically incomplete, and to say that in the pagan myths we shall expect to find distortions of 'the