

concerned with the fiction, most of the good things are to be found in the pieces given to the plays (Barbara Hardy's essay excepted). Perhaps this

has more to do with the very concreteness and directness of the theatrical works themselves than with the deficiencies of the critics?

BRIAN WICKER

EVELYN WAUGH: a Biography, by Christopher Sykes. Collins, London, 1975, 455 pp. £5.50.

Evelyn Waugh has been very fortunate in his biographer. Ever since his *Four Studies in Loyalty* Christopher Sykes has been known for his gift of concise vivid portrayal; not only Evelyn Waugh but his whole small world are brought alive. Among the miniature portraits some are very felicitous, like those of Robert Byron and Professor Whittemore; only one seems to me unjust, that of Brian Howard.

Evelyn Waugh's first marriage collapsed in September 1929. A year later he became a Catholic after a month's instruction. Christopher Sykes first met him in 1930. From then on he writes convincingly from a close personal knowledge. All the later Waugh is here with his Faith, his bitterness and his disillusion. These are not qualities that would have been there before 1930. It is difficult to believe that *Decline and Fall* and *Handful of Dust* are by the same author. Nancy Mitford has described the 'He Evelyn' and the 'She Evelyn' of the first marriage being happy together 'like two small boys'.

It is tenable that the collapse of the first marriage was a central cataclysm in Evelyn Waugh's life. Later generations can learn what he was really like since 1930 from reading Christopher Sykes. No one will ever know what he was like when he was writing *Decline and Fall* or producing his film *The Scarlet Woman*. His own autobiography never comes alive and his diaries are obviously unreliable except as a guide to his fantasies.

This admirably illustrated volume is more than a biography; it is also a sensitive and perceptive study in literary criticism. It is a convincing assessment, though I regret the author states that Mr Samgrass in *Brideshead* was drawn from Maurice Bowra; it is true that this was asserted by Evelyn himself but that was only one of his 'Maurice teases'. There was no point of resemblance. If Mr Samgrass had an original it was Professor Woodward. But this is a trivial criticism with which to end a tribute to a remarkable achievement.

GERVASE MATHEW OP

TEACH US TO PRAY, by André Louf. Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1974, 112 pp. £1.25.

André Louf, Abbot of the Trappist monastery of Katsberg in France, offers us a book on prayer that has the immediate attraction of being prayerful, springing from the silence of the author's own personal appropriation of the contemplative tradition. But this is a wonderfully fresh book, not an esoteric work geared to a purely monastic readership.

Louf has explicitly in mind all those who feel a longing to pray, but are aware of their inability to do so, those who have got nowhere with conventional books of oral prayers but nevertheless are searching for some 'way in' to contemplation. He presupposes that all the time the Spirit is praying within such people; his book attempts to lead them to a gradual break-through

to this 'deeper level of (each man's) interior being', and to conscious awareness of themselves as praying in union with Christ. He does not pretend the way will be easy; there are down-to-earth pages on distractions, temptations and spiritual aridity (e.g., pp. 74-7). He proposes no 'method' or specific techniques. One must learn simply to open the whole self to God and wait in silence on Him, to 'hang extravagantly about the Lord without being distracted'. Affective prayer is not helped by incessant verbalising and conceptualising but it still needs to be fed: the rich assortment of Scriptural and Traditional citations in this book, with Louf's comments upon them, may well help to fulfil this need.

I was particularly struck by the

author's unselfconscious appropriation of the Byzantine Tradition, which he has fused admirably with his profound grasp of the Bible and the great Cistercian and other medieval mystical theologians. He has clearly soaked himself in the *Philokalia* and the Desert Fathers (but why refer to the latter as 'priors'?—they were spiritual fathers, often anchorites, not coenobitic superiors). Louf's concern is clearly with the wholeness of the Christian spiritual tradition. His exposition of the Philokalian teaching on the *heart* as the centre of the praying person, into which the intellect must 'descend', and in particular his account of the Orthodox Jesus prayer, comes across as something not only based on scholarly *ressourcement* but as a vital element in the writer's own experience which may be commended without hesitation to other Western Christians

in search of God.

This book is above all Christocentric. It 'focuses much on the person of Jesus, seeing in His prayer the way to the Father'. Chapter 3 in particular meditates at length on the praying Christ as portrayed in the Gospel. Here perhaps the erudition is not so well digested: there is too much straight exegesis, too many references in the text, and do transliterations of Greek and Hebrew words help the general reader very much? Basically, however, we have here a spiritual work of unusual quality, which takes into account not only the problems of beginners, but the role of prayer in its full ecclesial and cosmic dimensions: prayer in the heart 'already penetrates to the heart of the world', and participates in Christ's ongoing work of salvation.

NICHOLAS GENDLE

CIVIL LIBERTIES IN BRITAIN, by Barry Cox. *Penguin Special*, 1975. 336 pp. 90p.

Barry Cox has provided a very well-researched and clearly-written account of the civil rights movement over the last fifty years. It is essentially the history of the National Council for Civil Liberties which was established, as its formal statement of aims declares, to 'assist in the maintenance of hard-won rights'. That was in 1934, and the Council's work has, of course, continued ever since.

The first part of the book deals with advances and setbacks in what Cox calls the basic freedoms, i.e., those of association, assembly, expression and movement. The second examines how justice is dealt by the police and the courts. The third discusses the position of minority groups, and the fourth the question of privacy. A review cannot do justice to the wealth of detailed information presented by the book, so I shall confine myself to one of the important general issues raised by it.

'Civil liberty', said Smythe, former general secretary of the NCCL, 'is not about the way you treat your friends, but about the way you treat your enemies': echoes of Jesus from a latter-day liberal. But in Jesus's case the question of one's relationship to the enemy reached a resolution in his death: a death which was either a final defeat at the enemy's hands or a transformation of the whole issue, depending on your point of view. For the NCCL

on the other hand, there is no such clear-cut end in sight. Whether the enemy is perceived as fascism or racism, or as power groups perverting the course of justice in their own interests, or as a status quo which penalises certain groups, the work of the NCCL can in no sense be interpreted as building up to a climax of total defeat or total victory. This message comes across clearly throughout the book.

Defeat is, of course, almost the daily bread of civil liberties groups. And, as Cox points out, a history of such organisations is inevitably in large part about acts of repression, since it is these which call rights into question in the first place. But defeat is seen by him not as a final outcome, but as part of a process of advance and setback; a process which he delineates as the classic civil liberty situation, and makes a central theme of the book. When rights are more widely and aggressively asserted, he argues, as they have been since the 1930s, authority is forced to respond. But the nature of that response is conditioned by the flexibility of the British system, expressed in the lack of a written constitution. This means that authority can act repressively simply by extending what powers it already has, but it also allows pressure from below to have a real impact. Hence there is unlikely to be a simple outcome to any