

those who regard Christian revelation as simply propositional (when he says 'facts' he usually means 'propositions'); but there are more complex issues in theological epistemology than he seems to appreciate when he says that 'true meaning is something to be participated in, not something to be "cracked" by logical analysis' (p. 108). It depends on what you mean by 'meaning'—and truth! The ideas, however, which Fr Hibbert draws from Elizabeth Sewell's book, *The Orphic Voice*, though they might benefit from some analysis, are certainly suggestive of new perspectives.

The best chapters are in the middle of the book. Using *Women in Love* and some of F. R. Leavis' work on Lawrence, Fr Hibbert persuasively exposes the will-to-power in our behaviour and presents the traditional doctrine of 'abandonment' in an entirely new light.

What he has to say about the body, what he says about dancing and smiling, where the mantic tone breaks through the denunciatory rhetoric, touches on something very important indeed: a deep sense of the reality of the Incarnation yields insight into the possibility of a new development in spirituality.

Fr Hibbert goes in for 'meaningfulness' rather than 'clarity' (p. 211), and the circuitous and minatory style can become irritating, but he has a rare gift for unsettling one's conventional assumptions. 'However difficult belief may be', he says (p. 204), 'fundamentally it is no more difficult to believe in God in Christ than it is to treat another human being truly as a person rather than as a thing.' That, unless I am very much mistaken, is the message of this remarkable first book.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

CHURCH AND MISSION IN MODERN AFRICA, by Adrian Hastings. *Burns & Oates, London, 1967.* 263 pp. 21s.

This study of modern Africa is an important contribution to the present struggle for renewal in the whole Church. Africa has problems of her own, but many are such as can only be tackled by the Church as a whole, and are extreme manifestations of those which are calling for solution everywhere. Our question of mixed marriages is spotlighted when we read that in many parts of Africa 60 per cent to 80 per cent of baptized Catholics are permanently excommunicated due to the impact of canon law on African social custom (polygamy appears to be only one factor, and not the most frequent, in this loss). Our own need for biblical and liturgical reform is magnified in a Church which has grown up without any vernacular Bible. And the movement towards greater flexibility and diversity in seminary training gathers speed in a country where the dominant urge is towards political and educational development, and where the shortage of priests is becoming disastrous. Fr Hastings believes that the Church has unconsciously erred in assuming that all priests should have approximately the same training. This fails to cater both for the brilliantly intellectual and for the non-intellectual seminarians. He pleads for 'a very diversified ministry, bound together by charity but not by uniformity' (in line with the teaching of St Paul), and asks for available training in the sciences and humanities, in the arts, and in practical skills such as electricity, plumbing and gardening. He also asks for a

stronger link between contemporary theologians and the missions, to the advantage of both.

The rule of clerical celibacy is approached by this missionary from the point of view of a large amorphous company of imperfectly taught and mostly non-eucharistic baptized Catholics. 'The local community is, maybe, one that prays together, but it is not one that regularly celebrates the Eucharist together. The majority of the faithful are quite unable to join in the Mass even once a week. Priests strain themselves to the utmost to get round the villages as often as possible, but they and their people are basically victims of a mistaken ecclesiology.' The ratio of priests to people in Africa is about 1 : 1,800, and, according to one authority, parishes of 40,000 staffed by two priests are by no means unknown. (Our priest : people ratio in England and Wales is about 1 : 644). 'The situation is far worse than this, for work in Africa is not merely pastoral but missionary. There are all the millions of pagans beyond, and so many of them are ripe to enter the Church. 'The lack of trust which has failed to ordain African priests in sufficient numbers (though now the number has been increased to about 150 a year) has resulted in a ratio of one African priest to 10,000 African Catholics. Fr Hastings' recommendation that tried and tested married deacons should be ordained, and form a second order of priests after the manner of the Orthodox Church, is

not his only proposal to meet this need. He would also increase and train more deacons and catechists, some as full-time workers, and some as voluntary part-time helpers. He points out too that the schools and hospitals, though excellent in themselves, absorb far too many priests, and that the schools, particularly need a type of reformation which would make Catholic education 'a genuine service of the wider community and not a segregated activity'! In fact, active collaboration with the general development of the people may be the passport to continued missionary presence in the new African countries.

It is refreshing to note this writer's view that the Church's attitude to marriage is at the heart of her crisis of renewal, at least in the missions: 'It is the frequency of the sacrament of marriage far more than the number of baptisms that really indicates the establishment of the Church. really indicates the establishment of the Church. That and the imparting of orders are the marks of a living Church: men and women consciously living the consecration of their baptism in their adult lives. Marriage is then at the very heart

of the missionary task, and it is truly extraordinary that the Conciliar Decree on Missionary Activity, following the example of earlier papal encyclicals on the missions, has literally nothing to say on the subject'. . . . 'The anaemia from which too much of the Church in Africa is clearly suffering cannot but be largely due to our failure to communicate at the level of marriage.'

The more revolutionary aspects of this book have been mentioned here in order to underline the message of the African Church to the rest of the world. But Fr Hastings gives plenty of solid evidence of his thought, and does not fail to appreciate the work that has been done in the past, often at heroic cost. The chapters on African history, on Post-Independence Africa, on Ecumenism, make excellent reading and serve to underline the urgent nature of his recommendations; for 'In fifteen years it may be too late, and in fifty years Church historians will lament the great opportunity forever missed.' This is the conclusion of his chapter on the ministry.

AGNES YENDELL

THE CHURCH AGAINST ITSELF. An enquiry into the conditions of historical existence for the eschatological community, by Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Sheed and Ward, London.* 1967. 245 pp. 27s. 6d.

Mrs Ruether has added her contribution to the present spate of books on the Church. She offers us a 'dialectical ecclesiology'. We are told that to be loyal to the true tradition of the Church—that is, to the Christ of faith—involves not only a genuine continuity but also a radical discontinuity, because our institutions and thought structures made necessary by the Church's historical existence imprison us, obscure the truth and end up by causing us to worship idols. The clash between the supporters of the institution and the *communio peccatorum* is the right and proper mode of existence for the Church if the rebirth of the eschatological community is to take place. Such a dialectical analysis of the Church's historical life is interesting, thought-provoking and useful, provided that we do not take it as the only way of looking at things. It is one way; it is not the key, nor does it invalidate other interpretations. Mrs Ruether is something of a puzzle here, for she sometimes treats conservatives and moderate reformers as having a legitimate and perhaps complementary point of view, but elsewhere dismisses them in almost harsh terms. I know that the whole point of her

argument is that the Church's productive life involves contradictions, but one has to make up one's mind whether all have a positive role to play or whether some people act merely negatively in the existential process.

It would be interesting to know what sort of readers Mrs Ruether had in mind when writing this book. Sometimes it reads like a manifesto, with rather questionable generalizations like 'Modern scholarship discounts all the apostolic names attached to canonical books . . . and even subtracts many books once attributed to Paul.' There is no suggestion in the footnote on page 107 that Cullman's conclusions on Peter may not be universally accepted. On the first page she suggests that many Catholics will be shocked by what they read, but it is difficult to believe that the people most likely to make their way through this book are not inured by now to the strong words and plain speaking released by the Council.

Certainly the conclusions of her argument do carry the advocacy of abolition to what must be new lengths for a Catholic. It makes Fr Adolph's recent controversial book read like a curial document. She recognizes the need for