

Having established a method or way of "doing theology of the New Testament", the author gives a chapter to each and ends with a "Response to Response", and finally "what lies behind it all" or Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and for ever.

An excellent bibliography and notes and references add much to the useful-

ness of this book. It is clearly and simply written, and fully critical; and the work of a believer. It constitutes a good starting work for anyone who wishes to go deeper and further. In this sense too it is an introduction to what can be a vast subject.

ROLAND POTTER O.P.

BASIC COMMUNITIES: Towards an Alternative Society by David Clark *SPCK* 1977 pp. 329. £5.50 (Paperback)

THE FAMINE BUSINESS by Colin Tudge. *Faber*, 1977 pp. 141 £3.95

Of these two books, one (Basic Communities) is stolidly sociological in approach, while the other is a frankly (and engagingly) propagandist work.

Do they have anything in common, apart from both being the subject of this review? I think so; and I think the common factor could be characterised as a concern with responsible awareness of one's surroundings. David Clark describes that concern as it is manifested in a number of 'intentional communities' (i.e. communities which intend to be such, as opposed to accidental agglomerations of bodies.) Colin Tudge energetically prescribes certain policies and practices which could transform The World Food Problem into the non-problem which, deep down, it really is.

The thesis of *The Famine Business* is that if only international trading policy and national agricultural policy were rationally ordered, everyone everywhere could be not merely fed but well-fed, and happy to boot. The three chief obstacles in the way of realising this desirable state of affairs are:

- a the inequity of world trade, dominated as it is by the myth that 'they' have the raw materials and cheap labour while we (God's Own Affluent Elite) have the know-how to convert the raw materials into the finished goods which alone make life worth living;
- b the demands of the food processing and packaging industry, with its stress on over-specialised farming (monoculture) and technologically efficient rather than labour-intensive methods;
- c the prejudices which people have about what's what in the nutritional hierarchy—the assumption that only meat will do if you want real protein, that

the pastry of a meat pie is merely stodge to keep the gravy in, and so forth.

The book is at its best when dealing with that last obstacle. Three chapters on nutrition, human biochemistry, and traditional folk cuisine as the source of nourishment and gastronomic delight, are the most cogent, detailed and lyrical bits of this essay in persuasion.

The author is less specific about the socio-economic implications of his thesis; but the paradigm case of a country achieving self-sufficiency is for him China; and the way forward into a rational agricultural self-sufficiency for the West, too, would be to challenge the all-wisdom of the big businesses which dominate the course of food from the seed-trough to the palate, and to let a home-grown Marxism provide the alternative.

The arguments in the book are well documented, and it has an excellent index.

Basic Communities is also, ostensibly, concerned with 'an alternative society'. But in fact it restricts itself to a sociological survey of certain types of community or commune, and doesn't give any detailed consideration to the implications these community experiments may have for society at large—although throughout the book there are implicit references to the spiritual, intellectual and environmental alienation which such communities wish to challenge or run away from.

Most of the groups analysed are modern religiously-inclined lay communities, though some are not religious, and some, like Findhorn, have a very different view of religion from that of the Grail or Lee Abbey. I'm not sure on what basis David Clark chose the few non-religious communities he did select out of the many

possible ones. Several of the communities had already died when he wrote, and it is of the nature of many of them that they will only last a short time. 'Community' normally refers to visible groupings of people in particular places, though it can have a more fluid reference when the subject is team ministry in Notting Hill, for instance. The author eschews analysis of traditional (celibate) religious communities.

Because groups of the type this book is concerned with are so varied and so variable, they are a difficult subject for analysis. David Clark finds a useful analytical tool in Peter Rudge's book *Ministry and Management*. He uses four of Rudge's five 'organisational models' to probe the underlying—and often unconscious—dynamic and self-definition of a group. (And if it seems odd to talk of unconscious self-definition, that may be a reflection of the failure of the more enthusiastic groups to go in for self-scrutiny.) The four models are, in Clark's reporting of Rudge: "The

traditional model based on the faithful maintenance of a common heritage; the *charismatic* linked to the pursuit of an over-riding intuition; the *classical* model (one which describes the bureaucratic organisation) which he talks of as running a machine; and the *human relations* model associated with self-determining small groups and with fellowship."

But the value of the book is probably to be found more in its descriptive content than its analytical acuity. It introduces us to a number of interesting features of a number of interesting experiments in community-building: none of the experiments may be all that significant individually. It remains to be seen whether taken as a whole they constitute a significant challenge to our society, or an avoidance of the real issues. The book is expensive and lacks an index, unless the Annotated List of Basic Communities is supposed to do.

COLIN CARR O.P.

THE MAN FROM PLAINS: THE MIND AND SPIRIT OF JIMMY CARTER, by David Kucharsky, Collins, £2.95

'Ethics', notes Mr. Kucharsky in this remarkable study of President Carter, 'has been a terribly neglected discipline. Most people never have a course in it unless they go to college'. It is fortunate then for the Free World that Jimmy Carter went to college, and has since lived out with deep conviction what he learnt there. In a moving scene depicted at the very beginning of this book, Carter returns to his hometown bible class only two weeks before the Democratic National Convention which was to nominate him for President. There is nothing false, showy or flamboyant in this homely tableau: 'The men, all neatly attired, well mannered, and gracious to the hilt, referred to one another as Brother Clarence, Brother Jimmy, and so on. With the room comfortably air-conditioned, they even kept on their suit jackets throughout the class'. Now there will always be cynics, not least among the self-styled 'intellectuals' of the so-called 'Left' with their *soi-disant* 'revolutionism', who will ask what those thirteen pressmen and photographers were doing there if Jimmy was merely sustaining his Sunday routine. But one cannot convince men for

whom the Sermon on the Mount itself was a publicity stunt.

What one can do, perhaps, is to show them that Jimmy Carter is no plaster saint, no tight-lipped long-faced kill-joy. Like every young kid with a bit of zest and kick in him, he dated girls—indeed he had his first date when he was thirteen, for which, Mr. Kucharsky tells us, he was allowed to use for the first time 'the family pickup truck'. Jimmy comes, as we all know, from Plains, Georgia, a town which 'is a perfect circle' (is it fanciful to regard this as more than mere coincidence?) and markets about twelve thousand tons of peanuts a year. Plains is an Evangelical stronghold, and Jimmy did not remain unaffected: as he grew to manhood he began to expand his personal service to the church, and 'to search more diligently for a closer relationship with God among (his) various business, professional and political interests'. Between God and American politics there exists, one might speculate, a certain fine tension; but it is a tension which I have rarely seen so shrewdly and sensitively managed as in the portentous words addressed to Carter (then Governor of