

ical leadership. Here the changes made possible in Catholicism by the Second Vatican Council, and the failure of Anglicanism to sustain an effective challenge either to the Afrikaners in South Africa or to Ian Smith's version of Rhodesia, have been decisive. Nevertheless, Hastings regards the future of African Catholicism as highly unpredictable, because to 'village Catholicism' 'the Mass, the priesthood and canonical marriage' are all becoming peripheral. Yet the resilience of Christianity, which has not been swept away in the flood-tide of African political freedom, but has instead evolved again and again into the one non-political hope of some sort of political and social stability, has been quite remarkable. One senses a lift in one's spirits as one reads on, because chaos has not confounded faith. And once in a while Hastings pauses to draw our attention to one of those deeply religious figures whose lives have changed whole areas of Africa. Most impressive of all is perhaps Simon Kimbangu, a Baptist who in 1920, in an

essentially pacific mission which lasted six months, was listened to as no missionary in the Congo had ever been; who was seized by the Belgians, for whom any kind of African initiative was unthinkable, and condemned to death in Elizabethville in 1921 on vague, irrelevant charges. His sentence was commuted and he lived quietly in prison until his death in 1951. 'He was never permitted a visit from any member of his family or a Protestant pastor'. No sentence in any book that I have read for years has given me a more desolating sense of the inhumanity of men. Yet his followers survived Belgian persecution, emerged confidently at independence, and remain a powerful Church. In Africa, to misquote Newman, there is a silence which speaks. And Adrian Hastings has caught, in what must, of course, be a provisional assessment of these tumultuous years, something of a *religious* history which has been at least as remarkable as anything which has happened politically,

JOHN KENT

**PERCIVAL AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD** by Jim Hunter. *Faber & Faber, 1978.*  
pp. 141 £4.95

In spite of some very good writing, I find this a disappointing novel. Neither the religious interest promised by the title nor the Arthurian apparatus really get us anywhere. Hunter situates his Percival firmly in a post-Roman Britain which is relapsing into barbarity, in which chivalry is present only as a fading ideal. Percival is looking for the Castle of the Grail, convinced that he will find it again one day; meanwhile he wanders around telling his story to anyone who is prepared to listen. He has come to doubt whether Arthur exists at all. And God has come to seem very remote.

There is obviously considerable potential here. In the medieval tales there is already good material to draw on for an account of the spiritual evolution of Percival, whether we focus on the mystical interpretation of the Grail offered by the prose Quest, or rather on the development from the childish "Mother, what is God?" of Wolfram's hero, through his cynical rejection of God ("Alas, what is God?"), to the final conversion. But all that Hunter is able to make of it is a detailed account of his hero's sex life, in which he assures us

that he "opened a direct way to God" the first time he made love to his wife, and periodic harmless references to his saying his prayers every day, and then a final acceptance of God's remoteness and the apparent pointlessness of life ("to some this is cynicism and to others it is faith. Either way, we have to live with the appearance of arbitrariness").

Apart from a good motif of a face seen in pain (Percival's knightly tutor first, then his enemy on the funeral pyre, then the Fisher King, then the figure of Christ), the symbolic potential is not exploited; the Grail is unexplained and unexplored. The quest for the Grail is left as a rather vacuous ideal. And since Arthur too, is an ideal with little content, we find ourselves with rather a superfluity of undetermined aspirations. Even the hoped for eventual return to Whiteflower does not bring anything together into any kind of coherence. There is some attempt to use Arthurian chivalry as a foil to show up the barbarity of the ordinary people, but the knightly "code" to which reference is often made especially at the beginning of the story has

little more religious cogency to it than the Force in Star Wars. There is none of the splendid juxtaposing and contrasting of the courtly world of Arthur with the spiritual world of the Grail, such as we find in the prose Quest.

**PERSONS AND LIFE AFTER DEATH** by Hywel D. Lewis. *Macmillan, 1979. pp. ix + 197. £6.95*

H. D. Lewis is well known as a vigorous defender of Cartesian mind/body dualism. In the present volume he again takes up a Cartesian position, but he spices it with some discussion of epistemology and method in philosophy (Chapters 1 and 2) and an address on the person of Christ (Chapter 8). He also allows his critics to take the floor against him. The book contains substantial contributions by Anthony Quinton, Bernard Williams, Antony Flew and Sydney Shoemaker (Chapters 4-6).

Lewis's new text reproduces a lot of material available elsewhere, and it is considerably less impressive than its immediate predecessors *The Elusive Mind* (1969) and *The Self and Immortality* (1973). But it is still a welcome addition to the series of which it forms part. Since there is no over-all theme, it amounts to a rather untidy collection; but its main value is clear enough. We have here a sophisticated attempt to state and defend a coherent and credible form of dualism with an eye on wide-ranging and crucial problems in philosophy of religion. Lewis is at his best with philosophy of mind, and anyone who believes that non-dualist theories are inevitable will find in his writing much interesting argument indicating the contrary. This is not to say that dualism is itself in-

There is quite pleasant reading to be had of this novel; but it cannot begin to compete with some other Arthurian novels such as those of Mary Stewart.

SIMON TUGWELL O. P.

evitable; Williams and the others put up a good fight. But Lewis still maintains a solid counter-attack which is well worth reading and which can reasonably be regarded as something to be reckoned with seriously.

The weakest parts of the book are those not directly concerned with survival and so forth. The first two chapters are interesting but inconclusive. The difficulty here is that Lewis is approaching large and complex issues in a rather general and discursive manner. The address on the person of Christ is also disappointing. "By any computation", Lewis declares, "Jesus was a most remarkable man and it is hard to think that he would not have made his impact on his own times and afterwards in some exceptional way if his life had not taken the course it did take." (p. 164) "It seems to me", he adds later, "that we have in Jesus someone who must have had an exceptional home. We know little about this, barely more than the name of his parents ... It is to me inconceivable that we should have such central reference to 'my heavenly father' if Jesus had not known in the fullest way what it is to have a fine father." (pp. 165-6) Lewis is a good philosopher, but reading this kind of thing makes one feel that writers like Schillebeeckx can sleep easy awhile.

BRIAN DAVIES O. P.

**L'ANTICO TESTAMENTO EBRAICO SECONDO LA TRADIZIONE PALESTINESE** by Bruno Chiesa. *Bottega d'Erasmus, Torino 1978. pp. xii + 424 L.35,000*

This volume deals with biblical philology in a highly technical fashion, and yet is of interest and importance to all who care about the text of the Old Testament. Bruno Chiesa is a young Italian scholar who offers us a complete catalogue of the fragments of the Hebrew Old Testament text using the so-called Palestinian system of punctuation (as known up to 1974), together with a collection of all their variant readings. He then studies the material from a textual history point

of view and in its historical context.

Perhaps, it is his method that will most attract the non-specialist believer, Jew or Christian. According to Chiesa no variant reading is to be judged on its own - each has to be placed in its cultural and historical milieu. With this in mind, he tries to retrace the communities that produced these texts, and to identify the conditions, religious and otherwise, that may have led them to write as they did.

ROBERT OMBRES O. P.

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