

with valuable comments on various particular issues such as the problem of 'origins' (p. 11—are 'origins' the cause of everything that follows?) and a neat critique of the criterion of dissimilarity as used in form criticism (p. 37–9). With the next chapter 'Jesus of Nazareth' naturally becomes the main focus of attention. The treatment is brief but on the whole well balanced, with a positive assessment of the possibility of using the Jesus-tradition to reach back to Jesus, enabling Brown to speak with confidence of Jesus' claim to authority and understanding of his mission. A separate chapter is devoted to the resurrection of Jesus, with a brief final section on the gift of the Spirit. The treatment of the resurrection appearances is particularly judicious (pp. 80–9). The fact that he restricts himself so firmly to a historical perspective makes his concluding comment worth noting: "'Christ was raised'" is not reducible to the platitude that "he lives on" in the preaching of the community' (p. 89).

Chapter 5, 'Neither Jew nor Greek', properly reflects the current emphasis in study of Christian origins that Christianity began as part of first century Judaism, and, in tracing out the impact of Paul on the new movement, Brown rightly insists that in spite of everything, Paul remained a Jew' (p. 101). Complementary evidence from Matthew and John confirms that four issues helped mould the emerging Christian self-consciousness—(1) freedom from the Torah, (2) christology, (3) the Gentile mission, and (4) Jewish persecution (p. 118).

The difficulty of writing on Christian origins once the focus shifts beyond Jesus and Paul and the moderate information provided by Matthew and John is very clear in the final chapter on 'The Church'. Some initial discussion of apostleship and tradition gives way to a very sketchy and bitty section entitled 'the second generation'. This section is the main weakness of the book. Even if we cannot penetrate very deeply into the life-setting reflected in most of the second generation writings, their very presence does indicate something at least of the diversity of the Christian movement in that period. More attention should have been given to Luke-Acts, and some account taken of Hebrews, the Petrites and Revelation. More important, when so much attention was given, quite rightly, to the question of Christianity's self-understanding in relation to Judaism, a good deal more attention should have been paid to the opposite problem—of Christianity being absorbed into or too much influenced by the syncretism which typified the Hellenistic world.

That apart, this is a most useful little book—a good starter for student work and one which study groups ready for some meaty issues could use to their profit.

JAMES D.G. DUNN

WE DRINK FROM OUR OWN WELLS: The Spiritual Journey of a People.
Gustavo Gutierrez. *S.C.M Press, London, 1984, 181pp. £5.50.*

Latin American Liberation Theology, an area in which Gutierrez is one of the mostly widely read and debated writers, has aroused, predictably enough, a good deal of anxiety and downright hostility in Rome. Cardinal Baggio, until recently Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops, has expressed a determination to "smash this thing", while Cardinal Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has also expressed a marked hostility to the movement, criticising the use of Marxist terminology in the writings of Gutierrez for example. I suspect that such criticisms as theirs are at least a part of his reason for writing this book, and the profound Christ-centredness of the book ought to show just how unfounded accusations of "ideologising" are.

It is certainly most refreshing to find a book on spirituality that is not primarily concerned with "inner peace" or some sort of private "experience" of God in the way that so much modern spiritual writing is. He criticises the exclusive traditions of spirituality based on the flight from the world, a flight that is made possible only by possession of a degree of wealth and freedom from worldly concern ensured by the

labour of the poor.

He also attacks the individualism of this kind of spirituality, its obsession with the interior life, which rendered the virtues (even charity) as harmless intentions or states of mind. What he is offering in place of this "spiritualism and individualism", as suggested by the title, is an understanding of spirituality as the Christian life lived in the light of "encounter with the Lord", not in the comparatively trivial sense of having had some inner experience of Him, but precisely in the life of the Messianic community. But "there is no authentic evangelisation that is not accompanied by action in behalf of the poor". (p. 44) And it is just such action in behalf of the poor that identifies the community as Messianic, as Jesus' works and words for the poor and the needy served to identify Him as the Messiah. (Luke 4:18)

This encounter with the Lord, the life in the community that has made an "option for the poor", is the well from which we drink, the source of our spiritual lives. It is in this spirituality, this way of following Jesus, that the Christian is freed by God's love—freed for a love that is gratuitous, as God's love is gratuitous, and which seeks to "achieve historical efficacy" (p. 112) in solidarity with the poor. It is out of this spiritual journey, made often in much suffering, that "joy springs from the hope that death is not the final word of history". (p. 118)

'there is nothing at all unorthodox about any of this, nor anything particularly new, though Gutierrez' powerful rhetorical style makes exciting reading at times. There is certainly nothing whatsoever in this that Roman officialdom has any reason to find objectionable. It is all supported by frequent references to such authoritative sources as John Paul II, several Encyclicals, the Medellin and Puebla Conferences, Teresa of Avila, Oscar Romero and so on.

One criticism that ought to be made, however, is of a theme that appears occasionally which suggests that the Christian vocation somehow involves *my* becoming aware of *my* rights as a son or daughter of God, rather than becoming aware of the call to service and sacrifice that being a son or daughter implies. If this is what Roman officials find objectionable about liberation theology, then they are right to this extent to question its orthodoxy.

However, though there are passages where Gutierrez does seem to be suggesting this, the view is not central, nor even important, to his thesis. His discussion of gratuitous and liberating love of the poor, on the other hand, puts this sense of "my own rights" firmly in the background where it belongs. "The experience and idea of the gratuitousness of God's love are fundamental and of central importance in the Christian life" (p. 109) and it is precisely from this love that our efficacious love for the poor must flow.

Even if Gutierrez himself does not steer completely clear of insistence on "my rights" in one or two places, the Latin American Church and the liberation movement whose experiences and insights he seeks to articulate are certainly free, for the most part, of this way of thinking. There is a spirituality of service and self-sacrifice, a spirituality that has led many to martyrdom. Even the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops cannot "smash this thing".

GILBERT MÁRKUS OP

THE WORD OF GOD IN THE ETHICS OF JACQUES ELLUL by David W. Gill.
Scarecrow Press, London 1984. Pp. 213. £17.50

No Christian thinker can safely bypass Jacques Ellul, who, having articulated a searching critique of modern social organisation as telling as any in our age, has consistently attempted to show that such a critique belongs, as of right, to Christian theology. But the reader who makes up his mind to begin may well be daunted by the diversity and extent of the Ellul corpus, and not less by the way in which its author characteristically expresses himself. "Hasty and sloppy expression", comments the