

These are the questions Leech is grappling with the last part of his book.

Even so, the answers he gives add little of real importance to what he has already said before elsewhere. This is not surprising. After all, his basic presuppositions have not changed, and it is some of these—not the data here—that are challengeable.

For a start, plenty of evidence exists to confirm his conclusion that two differing interpretations of Christianity are going to dominate the West, one 'mystical' and one 'political', and that the conflict between them 'will form the most important division between the Christians of the future'. What he calls 'the signs of hope' in the churches—in other words, the areas of activity—have largely involved the middle-aged middle class. They have not touched the counter-culture . . . with one possible exception. The exception is, of course, the boom in pentecostalism, the one worship-form which it seems can at the moment give Christians outside the Catholic tradition easy if very limited access to the 'mystical'. But pentecostalism is something Leech distrusts. He sees it as leading to bogus other-worldliness and a swing away from social and political commitment.

Now, he has good reasons for distrusting any aspects of pentecostalism and he is justifiably alarmed by the right-wing attitudes of

many young practising Christians, but clearly he is unaware of the complex hidden links existing even between this bogey, pentecostalism, and some of the developments of which he does approve. He tells us that 'there is no authentic left-wing movement of any significance in Britain which derives its inspiration from Christian theology', but this is by no means certain—unless by 'movement' he means something structured. Surely what *is* certain, though, is that no such movement could possibly have a great future unless it were as much 'mystical' as it was 'political'.

We are being pushed on to question an even more basic presupposition of Leech's. He has some good things to say—about the role of the clergy in the future, for instance—but what is his prime concern? To try to present orthodox Christianity in a way that will attract a particular cultural group? Yet is this, in all seriousness, possible or even desirable? Doesn't it assume that, starting from the secular, we can move to the transcendent? Doesn't it assume, in other words, that God's nature is very different from that of the God of Christian revelation, Kenneth Leech's God?

All the experience and researching that has obviously gone into *Youthquake* will only be justified if this book gets people asking these fundamental questions.

JOHN ORME MILLS, O.P.

THE DESERT IS FERTILE, by Helder Camara. *Sheed and Ward*, London, 1974. 61 pp. £1.85.

This book of prose and poems by Archbishop Helder Camara consciously has a minority appeal; it is a 'very personal plea' from the author to the minority seeking to build a really just and more human society. In a world where '20 per cent of mankind owns more than 80 per cent of the resources and 80 per cent has only 20 per cent of the world's resources on which to live' (p. 30) there is a minority of men and women who are ready for any sacrifice in the service of their fellows. It is to these people that Camara's plea is addressed, whether they be Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Islamic or atheist Humanist—indeed, people in the latter category have a vital role to play for the atheist 'can find in his very atheism reasons to convince himself and others why they should become involved in the struggle against injustice, marginalisation and slavery' (p. 55).

The substance of the Archbishop's plea is that those who thirst for justice, all those not sold to avarice, ambition and selfishness' (p. 11) should seek one another out and work together in non-violent action groups against all forms of oppression, exploitation and slavery. He describes these non-violent action groups

as 'Abrahamic minorities'—'Abrahamic' because they are pregnant with the possibility of a renewed humanity and because the members of these minorities will, like the Patriarch, have to make 'the blind leap/letting God take over' (p. 9). For the unbeliever the leap is from a myopic, uncaring individualism; for the believer it is from the comfortable illusion of a cosy and often luxurious temple religion. For both believer and unbeliever the goal of the leap, the purpose of the Abrahamic minority, 'is not superficial reform but the transformation of inhuman structures' (p. 47).

One may want to question Camara's absolute prohibition of armed violence, one may feel that his reluctance to countenance the word 'enemy' (see p. 11) smacks of eirenicism, but one cannot ignore the fact that this book is vibrant with love, with passion and compassion.

It is a disturbing little book; it will challenge those who have eyes to see and ears to hear the truth, but 'Do not fear the truth/hard as it may appear/grievously as it may hurt/it is still right/and you were born for it' (p. 22).

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