

trialised society sooner or later is bound to offer opportunities undreamed of by the NT writers for the realisation of those commands. Hengel's pessimism, rooted in a deep sense of man's innate sinfulness, makes him cautious about the possibilities of radical change, whereas people influenced (albeit very indirectly) by the teaching on man and grace that is found in Aquinas are certain to be more optimistic. (Is it surprising that the Theology of Liberation, which owes so much to ideas advanced by some Protestant theologians, has put up its most promising shoots in a Catholic culture?) Moreover, Hengel, whose book had its origins in a lecture given in Bavaria in 1972, is primarily conscious of the dilemmas of the Christian living in an affluent society. The Christian living in Britain in 1975 may be equally conscious of the need for an answer to the question: 'What has Christianity to say to people grown used to affluence who will soon have to cope with a real decline in living standards'?

As is very rightly pointed out in this book, Christians of the apostolic age would not and could not wrestle with issues like these since, as far as they were concerned, the only possible 'transfer of control of the means of production', the only possible cosmic metamorphosis, would be that accompanying the Parousia—which was seen as an event so imminent that concern for property and status or for political freedom and social justice no longer made any sense, and already, so it seemed, there was 'neither slave nor free'. But Hengel, having (in those passages where he is differentiating the first Christians from us) said quite a lot about the place of eschatological expectation in the lives of the first Christians, says nothing about the central place hope must still have in the Christian life today. Yet, surely, without the certainty that the Kingdom is indeed breaking into this world, without that lively hope. Christianity becomes a cluster of good intentions? It is not, in the last resort, *we* (as Hengel says) who 'shall rob the "demonic" nature of property of its force'. Far too much

in the book's closing paragraphs is not specifically Christian, but could have been culled from the columns of almost any liberally-minded magazine. The journey through the book is very much more stimulating than the general conclusions proffered at the end of it.

The author has covered so much in a small space that complaints about detailed aspects of his account are bound to sound carping. The opening chapters in particular are full of interesting facts, but the apocalyptic texts cited do not in fact justify our thinking that apocalyptic was as hostile specifically to the rich as Hengel contends; on the other hand, not enough emphasis is given to the near-identification in Jewish thought of a person and his property. And there is one chapter I feel is strikingly weaker than the rest—that on the Jerusalem church of the Acts 'summaries'. This is little more than a summary of the views of the philosopher Ernst Bloch who, like Troeltsch, argues that there was indeed a 'primitive Christian love-communism' practised at Jerusalem, but does not meet adequately the criticisms of the exegetes who, on the grounds of inconsistencies in the relevant texts, deny that this was the case. In fact, recent sociological studies have revealed the variety and flexibility of forms of property-sharing and attitudes to property in modern communitarian projects: the 'inconsistencies' in the relevant sections of the Acts text vanish when rigid notions of the community structure are jettisoned. Hengel, having opted for a 'communism' in Acts of a kind only found in Britain today in a handful of self-actualising communes, inevitably exaggerates the difference in way of life of the Jerusalem church compared with the Pauline mission churches.

But flaws of this sort do not detract from what is most valuable about this book. For (quoting Hengel himself) 'There is an urgent need for a social history of early Christianity', and here is a beginning—a good glimpse of the overall picture, many parts of which have still to be filled in.

JOHN ORME MILLS OP

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR CHILDREN? Faith-tensions in Christian families today, by Anthony Bullen. *Collins Fontana*. London, 1974. 188 pp. 40p.

In his latest book Anthony Bullen sets out to dispel the still too common misapprehensions about the fundamentals of the Christian religion, and particularly the Roman Catholic religion. The book is well written, in refreshingly simple language, but a parent whose concern extends to the search for enlightening literature on the faith-tension within his own family does not need to be told facts he must have considered long ago. The genuinely worried parent who buys Fr Bullen's book will find he has been misled by its title, for the question

raised is neither answered nor treated in any depth. The author admits himself that he 'offers no slick solutions, no ready-made answers'; neither, however, does he illuminate sufficiently clearly the cause of the present problem. The book is, in his own words, an attempt 'to lead the reader into a re-examination of his own understanding of Faith, a reappraisal of his own relationship with God through Jesus Christ'. In fact, yet another catechism, if somewhat more adult.

The mistake of inadvertently converting the

converted is only too common among men and women of good will, and the public in greatest need of re-education regarding 'faith-tensions today' is only too rarely reached, being a public with little thirst for knowledge of abstract realities, little incentive to search for truths that cannot be reified. Fr Bullen's book will, I fear, prove to be of only marginal value to precisely the very public it most desires to address—the Christian, and particularly the Catholic, parents who are in fact those least likely to purchase religious literature unfamiliar to their taste and uncongenial to their very concrete method of thinking. It is the parish priest, to whom just possibly these parents may turn when they are puzzled by the faith-problems burgeoning in their families, who is likely to find Fr Bullen's book most useful. He will find it eminently suitable for use in discussion groups.

In chapter seventeen, 'Understanding Sexuality', the author tries to help parents to con-

vey the meaning of sexuality to growing children. He misses the point, however. In my experience, it is not only wrong but even harmful to imply to either a child or an adolescent that sexuality is a physical activity, based on a love relationship, which is aimed wilfully at future parenthood—in other words, is an *entirely* procreative act of two people in love with each other. It must be stressed that sexual relationship should have lovemaking, literally the 'making of love', as its aim, not only the making of children. In fact, the 'making of love' should be emphasised as being its highest aim, I deeply believe.

The rest of the book I see as a lucid restatement of what should be common knowledge . . . which will be prevented by its format from having the impact it aims for. Weekly leaflets, handed out with the parish news bulletin, might realize its objectives more satisfactorily.

CATHERINE ECKERSLEY

SO YOUR WIFE CAME HOME SPEAKING IN TONGUES? SO DID MINE!, by Robert Branch. *Hodder and Stoughton*, 1974. 123 pp. 45p.

In its unpretentious way, I think this may be one of the most important books so far written on the 'charismatic movement', if only because it abounds in honesty and humility, two qualities strangely lacking in most of the literature. It is a straightforward account of the agony undergone by a devout man whose wife became involved in a 'charismatic' group. Their marriage very nearly broke down under the strain. But, in the outcome, both learned a new depth of love and generosity, which enhanced both of them immensely, leading both of them beyond the prejudices with which they started, one for and the other against the 'charismatic movement'.

The message of the book is loud, clear and necessary: the 'charismatic movement' is a fact. It is too late to ask whether it should

have happened, it *has* happened. We have got to learn to live with it, whether we like it or not—just as one has to learn to live with earthquakes and falling in love and other such hazards of life. Even if (*per impossibile*) the movement were wholly good, its adherents would still need to learn how to grow in love; even if it were (equally *per impossibile*) wholly bad, its opponents would still have to seek out with regard to it how in the particular case 'all things work together for good for those who love God'.

Of course the work of spiritual and doctrinal discernment remains as urgent as ever; but there is more chance of its being done fruitfully if we can prevent the church simply splitting into charismatics and anti-charismatics. There is more to the christian life than that!

SIMON TUGWELL, O.P.

THE GOSPELS FOR PREACHERS AND TEACHERS, by Franz Kamphaus. *Sheed & Ward*, London, 1974. 386 pp. £8.

Finely translated by David Bourke, this book could do a great deal for those who are perplexed about how to make the transition (to quote the German title) *from exegesis to preaching*. The author, who is a priest, now lecturing in pastoral theology at Münster University, wrote it as a result of his own difficulties in relating modern biblical research to his weekly Sunday sermons.

He begins by presenting a very middle-of-the-road Catholic account of modern exegetical assessment of the Easter stories, citing standard

authorities but wearing his learning lightly. In a second phase he demonstrates how little most Easter preaching has to do with the Easter stories thus properly interpreted—he draws upon German anthologies of sermons and preachers' handbooks, but the predominantly apologetic and moralistic rhetoric is familiar; and he suggests, without giving sermons, the lines along which a preacher who has meditated the exegesis might proceed. He repeats this process with the miracle stories and then with the infancy narratives.