

REDISCOVERING THE TEACHING OF JESUS, by Norman Perrin. *S.C.M. Press*. 1967. 272 pp. 40s.

The author, who studied under T. W. Manson and Joachim Jeremias, is now a Professor in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. His book is an important contribution to the debate over the quest for the historical Jesus. Its importance lies chiefly in the first and last of the five chapters; the former gives the criteria used by the author for judging whether a statement put on Jesus's lips by the evangelists may certainly be regarded as authentic (i.e. to have been said by Jesus himself); the latter provides a survey of the debate from the first salvo, fired posthumously by Reimarus, whose four-thousand-page manuscript was published by Lessing in 1770, up to 1965.

Perrin starts from the fact, acknowledged now even in Catholic circles, that the early community 'made no attempt to distinguish between the words the earthly Jesus had spoken and those spoken by the risen Lord through a prophet in the community' (p. 15); his purpose is to provide certain criteria for the former, making no judgment on the inspiration or value for Christians of the latter. In keeping with his principle 'when in doubt, discard', the criteria are stringent in the extreme (pp. 39-47): (i) Criterion of dissimilarity: one may be sure that words are Jesus's own only when the form of words used is foreign both to Judaism and to hellenistic Christianity. If certainty is to be achieved at all costs, this is valid enough; but it rules out logia which could still be Jesus's and which e.g. influenced the form of words adopted by hellenistic Christianity. Two examples, taken from Jeremias whose influence is paramount throughout the exegetical portion of the work, are given: sayings introduced by 'Amen I say to you', and those which include *Abba*' (the author admits that this goes against his principle, since the expression is current in Paul; but at least he makes no further use of such sayings). (ii) Criterion of coherence: this allows material which coheres with material established as authentic by the first criterion. (iii) Criterion of multiple attestation: this

admits material which is attested in all, or most, of the sources discernible behind the synoptic gospels; this, which Perrin regards as the most objective of the criteria, is in fact very tricky to handle and should surely admit much of the Son of man material which Perrin discards. He dismisses John briefly: 'as far as our present knowledge and methodological resources go, the gospel of John is not a source of knowledge for the teaching of Jesus', without so much as a reference to the contrary evidence of C. H. Dodd's *Four Johannine Herrenworte* (NTS 1955/6). After such ferocious barking one expects nine-tenths of the gospel tradition to be bitten off and swallowed in one. There are more growls later: of Mark 13 'we have no present means of recovering any authentic teaching from it' (p. 155); 'there are comparatively few narratives which correspond in any way to events in the ministry of Jesus', and from these 'we can derive little, if any, historical knowledge of that event' (p. 219); Perrin holds that most of the seemingly historical narratives give typical rather than particular scenes, as is undoubtedly true of some, for example obviously generalized narratives of miracles (Mt 12 : 15; 7 : 21). The interest of Perrin's method is that it is minimalist: the authenticity of a logion may not be accepted until it has been proved; usually the reverse is true: the authenticity should be accepted unless it has been disproved. But of course neither method gives a complete picture; Perrin's procedure excludes too much, while the reverse procedure may include some teachings, details of whose formulation spring from the tradition.

In fact Perrin isolates three areas of teaching by his first criterion (the parables, the Kingdom of God teaching, the Lord's prayer tradition), and works out from there by the criterion of coherence. He tempers his absolutist principles with so much commonsense that far less is bitten off than one feared. Chap. 2 deals with passages on the Kingdom of God; Perrin shows

why these may be regarded as authentic, and gives an exegesis. Although this is not the first time it has been done (Perrin acknowledges his debt to Bultmann and Jeremias), it is refreshing to see again Jesus's parables and forceful sayings in all their vividness when they are replaced in their original *Sitz im Leben*; one example which was particularly striking was the recreation of the atmosphere of conflict in which the Kingdom was coming (pp. 67, 77). Chap. 3 has some interesting work on faith, contrasting the demand for faith in the miracle stories with the lack of such a demand in hellenistic and rabbinic miracle stories. Perhaps the most interesting discussion is on the Son of man in Chap. 4; here Perrin has used extensively Colbe's still unpublished article for TWNT, and certainly has a lot of good material. He insists that, though Jewish apocalyptic freely used the imagery of Dan. 7, a transcendent Son of man coming on earth is a total novelty; but the innovation is not Jesus's, for Perrin traces it back to Christian *pesher* on the Qumran model, which understood the resurrection as an exaltation in the terms of Dan. 7 and Ps. 110, and the crucifixion in terms of Zech. 12:10 (here a complicated and improbable punning process is required). This does seem putting the cart before the horse; some adequate reason is required for the development of these *pesharim*, and none could be more adequate than Jesus's use of the term; but Perrin maintains that 'the Son of man sayings in the tradition all reveal themselves to be products of the early Church' (p. 198), without sufficient grounds. There are countless instances of such sweeping conclusions on what seems to me insufficient evidence; frankly, I find the book learned and stimulating, but do not trust the author's

judgment. To take examples just from pp. 26-27: an explosive generalization like 'no ancient texts reflect the attitudes characteristic of the modern world' throws doubt on an author's reliability. He belittles Paul's historical value as witness for the last supper by claiming that he received his tradition from the risen Lord of the Damascus road experience, neglecting to mention that the verses where he gives this tradition are couched in un-Pauline language which suggests that he learnt this tradition by heart from earlier links in a chain of witnesses (similarly 1 Cor. 15:3-7). Perrin dismisses Luke's appeal to eye-witnesses (Lk. 1:2) by saying that the word 'is paralleled in meaning' by the word for the witnessing function entrusted to Paul by Ananias (Acts 24:15); but the words *autoptai* and *martus* have clearly different senses.

The historical survey of *Leben Jesu Forschung* (for until recently it was a predominantly German concern) in the last chapter guides the reader with great skill through that battlefield strewn with corpses and still-live mines, pointing out those who led assaults and the consequences of these. It was interesting to find that the Catholic Church had advanced almost to its present position as early as 1838 (led by J. E. Kuhn) before the modernist bomb sent us scurrying for the trenches. The question of the historical Jesus, and his relation to the Christ of the gospels, is a less burning one for Catholics, whose assent to the inspired quality of the tradition is more real; but the desire always remains to come nearer to grasping the magic of the Lord as he was. To this quest Perrin's book has a stimulating contribution to make.

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WHO IS MY BROTHER? by Theo Westow. *Sheed and Ward*. 1966. 118 pp. 13s. 6d.

'This book is addressed, not to a particular section of the public, but to anyone who thinks that his or her fellow human beings are important' (p. vii). This remark in the Foreword to Theo Westow's lively and valuable little book, *Who is my Brother?*, gives a clear indication of the whole direction of his thought. This book is an effort to find a much-needed identity for Christians at the present moment, an identity which is in complete accord with the Gospel and at the same time relevant to us now, which not only gives internal cohesion to the Christian community but which also indicates its commitment to the transformation of the world.

It is both Christian and revolutionary because these two things are inextricably bound up together.

The book falls naturally into two sections. The first two chapters seek to provide a theoretical substructure to the notion of universal brotherhood. The remaining five chapters deal with the concrete situation of the Christian, both historically and at the present time. It is in these chapters that we see the theme of the universal brotherhood of man worked out. The three great sacral institutions of man, the Church, the State and the Family, are exposed, enabling all to see their inherent