

the day of judgment open our eyes to the havoc wrought in the community by our neglect of grace. Even where there is question of a fault which can be judged by men its subsequent effect in the community falls under human judgment only in so far as the culprit had the capacity to foresee and the obligation to take into account the social consequences of his action (e.g. seduction, scandal). One may with good reason defend himself before men by maintaining that he did not anticipate these consequences and yet pray fearfully to God: *ab alienis parce servo tuo.* (85).

Here, on a theme in our time sadly topical, we have a problem well discerned, and an arresting thesis put forward in answer. But the implications of the thesis are fantastic: does Fr Häring mean that if a man were to confess the sin which he committed by his passive acceptance of Nazism, *he could not be absolved*? He offers no argument for such a conclusion; and in developing it he assumes blandly that 'foresaw' means the same as 'could have foreseen'. This is the writing of a man of imagination and vision: but not of a man who stops to ask himself what his words imply.

Reviews

THE ADVENT HOPE, A Study of the Context of Mark 13, by Graham Neville; Darton, Longman and Todd, 14s.

It is good to welcome a Protestant book which, in spite of serious faults, makes a further positive contribution to discussion about the second coming of our Lord. The author is here concerned not so much with the nature of that event as with the proper attitude of Christians who find that they have a long intervening period to live through before the event arrives. The norm used for this attitude is the concern of the Old Testament prophets for history—how they saw in its every movement the working of the divine will through the free actions of men. With inspired insight into contemporary affairs against the background of their knowledge of Israel's religious traditions, the prophets perceived something of the ways of God and his will for the world. Drawing on this perception, their proclamations about the imminent conclusive action of God in history held a further and still deeper resonance. They were descriptive too of history's ultimate goal, which in view of God's self-consistency, or

'truth', must correspond essentially to the divine will perceived in the current situation. The prophets' concern, then, was with the imminent future and also with the ultimate consummation of history. Concerning what, if anything, lay between they were not interested. They had nothing to say about the time-scale by which the transition from the immediate to the ultimate was to take place. Their message was one of ethical exhortation to the chosen community to be obedient to God's will, so that the threatened judgment might not, in the event, be Israel's destruction.

To the apocalyptic writers, on the other hand, history's only importance was as a measure of the interval before God's final intervention. That earnestly awaited event was to be not merely an end to history but its negation, as opposed to the consummation looked for in the prophetic hope. Apocalyptic writing was therefore not interested in the ethical living-out of history, but only in awaiting the day on which God, disregarding previous historical development, will capriciously gather his elect into a better age. On these two Old Testament traditions, which Graham Neville treats as mutually contradictory, the whole book is articulated. Apocalyptic, for him as for C. H. Dodd and J. A. T. Robinson, is a distortion, a falling away from the truth of pure prophetism. It arises from the deep suffering of individuals whose despair of the historical fulfilment of God's promises drives them to seek escape by placing their hope in an arbitrary, predestined day of judgment.

The useful part of this book is in the central three chapters. In the first of these we are shown the way in which there is a continuity (not temporal) between the immediate historical and the eschatological significance of Old Testament prophecies, especially, for example, in Joel. In the next chapter the author places Jesus squarely in this prophetic tradition, and examines Mark 13 and its parallels in Matthew and Luke. The Marcan account of the future judgment is shown to reflect this position of Jesus along the formal lines of the book of Joel. But this authentic prophecy of Jesus was distorted by the early Church, Graham Neville believes. The first Christians failed to understand his eschatological teaching. Under the stress of suffering and persecution they re-applied to an event that would end it all the Lord's words which had originally concerned either the time of his ministry (e.g. the parables of crisis) or else the early, foreseeable future of the Church (e.g., the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in Mark 13). In a further chapter we are given a handy sketch of the varied development of the early Church's eschatology in the different main parts of the New Testament.

The final chapter of the book, which expresses the author's purpose in writing all the foregoing, is much less happy. Among Christians today he sees two extreme tendencies, neither radically concerned to take a lead in current events of the world so as to bring human society to the perfection planned for it by God. This is the true task of the Church, we are told, so that the promised consummation of all things may be hastened, in fulfilment of the prophetic hope. At one extreme is 'Adventism', a modern adaptation of apocalyptic, presumably represented by some of the wilder Protestant sects. At the other end we have

'Realized Eschatology', whose adherents are apparently unconcerned for any decisive future event, but seem to be satisfied with the *Eschaton* in their midst, which they identify with their own institutional Church. The main example of this is the 'Roman Catholic' Church, of which Graham Neville's ideas are so erroneous as to be not worth refuting here. Suffice it to say that we have not yet rejected the Creed, or forgotten that the sacraments are 'pledges of future glory'. That the visible Church could sometimes have paid more regard to the positive building up of the temporal order, in matters of social justice, for example, is no doubt arguable. But despite the importance of working for the fulfilment of God's will on earth and so bringing nearer (in some sense) the last day through the practical exercise of charity, that other clear teaching of scripture which enjoins on us detachment from the world must also not be overlooked. Commandments to 'let those who have wives live as though they had none', and the rest, can no more be disregarded by the Church than can the so-called 'distortions' of apocalyptic expectation. The valid and inspired significance of the latter for the present age between the comings of Christ is that the kingdom of heaven has even now drawn near, with a theological if not a temporal proximity, and that consequently Christians are to be continually prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. The Church is called to be at the same time active in history and contemplative of the perfection of Christ living in her. And so she redeems the time, conscious that in her the Kingdom is fully though invisibly present in the world, as with all creation she eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

Summing up, we can say that the eschatological perspective of this book is in general that of J. A. T. Robinson in his important study, 'Jesus and his Coming', although Graham Neville explicitly disagrees with him in some matters of detail. The book under review is of the nature of a general survey, compared with Robinson's more thorough study. The welcome contribution here is the author's demonstration how the continuity between Jesus' prophecies for the near future and those for the last day is rooted in a similar continuity in the inspired utterances of the prophets.

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COME DOWN, ZACCHAEUS, by Solange Hertz; The Newman Press, \$4.50

MEDITATIONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT—WISDOM, by Gaston Brillet, C.O.R.,; Desclée Co., \$3.75

PAGES D'ÉVANGILE, by Ph. Dagonet; Les Éditions du Cerf, 7,50 NF

'It's only sporting to tell you nobody asked me to write it. I just went ahead and wrote it anyway without waiting to be asked, because I got so enthusiastic about the Bible I couldn't control myself any longer. Looking back over what