

base. William B. Hill, a late nineteenth-century Seventh-day Adventist evangelist in the Midwest, encountered a considerable number of spiritualists for whom spiritualism seems to have been more religious in nature than that of the Eastern elite. If there is any way of examining these popular attitudes, the validity of Moore's argument for the movement as a whole could be tested.

Second, the relationship between spiritualism and parapsychology needs further examination. Although it is clear that some of the early researchers of psychical phenomena were also spiritualists, Moore says nothing about the attitude of spiritualists generally toward parapsychology, nor does he note whether recent parapsychologists have been interested in spiritualism. Analysis of this relationship may clarify the differences between two movements that, as Moore indicates, had much in common.

Considerable work remains to be done in the effort to understand these movements, but Moore has provided a study that will shape future research. He has produced a book that is fascinating both in its detail and in its general interpretations. In reading this volume, historians of American culture will find that what seems a periphery phenomenon illuminates the whole.

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Sider, Ronald J. *Christ and Violence*. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979. 108 pp. Paperback, \$4.95.

In *Christ and Violence* Ronald Sider attempts to give a theological justification for the involvement of Christians in the use of political power to change unjust economic and social structures and to safeguard mankind from the pangs of hunger and the annihilation of a nuclear conflict. Sider's attempt is especially significant, since he is writing from within the Peace-Churches tradition, which has advocated radical non-resistance and separation from the political world. One must note that Sider's concern is the whole world rather than the United States of America.

To understand some of the proposals that Sider summarizes in *Christ and Violence*, one should also read his former book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, a book that should be required reading for all those who profess to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Sider appeals for a simpler life style on the part of individual Christians—one that will make more food available for the starving masses of the third world—, and he even suggests the boldness for Christians to pool their possessions and share them more equitably. As for churches, he calls for less emphasis on the construction of "representative church buildings" that under the pretense of serving God

flatter the pride of men. His main thrust, however, is for a new international economic policy, a fairness in dealing with underdeveloped countries that recognizes the needs of their peoples as much as and even more than the never-satiated appetites of affluent Westerners. Sider is honest enough to tell his readers frankly that to be a Christian in an age of hunger calls for dispensing with many of the artificial wants fostered by Madison Avenue in the name of comfort first and necessity afterwards. Recognizing that the demands of Christian stewardship will cost plenty, he asks whether Christians are willing to tell their elected officials that they are ready to pay the cost of international justice.

Sider is not a Marxist. He does not attack private ownership, but he draws his inspiration from the OT principle of Jubilees that called for a periodic redistribution of wealth and thus guaranteed the perpetuation of a degree of equality in well-being for all Israelites. Sider does not advocate Christian support for violent qualitative changes, but he calls upon missionaries to let the poor of the world know that the God of Christianity is the God of the poor, and he wants them to talk unambiguously of the economic structures implied in the Christian Scriptures. In following that course, Sider recognizes the likelihood of persecutions and sufferings.

Sider's objective in *Christ and Violence* is to show that the use of political power is fully compatible with the way of suffering servanthood, so dear to the members of his religious tradition. He asserts that one may advocate non-violence without having to practice non-resistance, that non-coercive resistance is not synonymous with rebellion. He reminds non-violent Christians that when they participate in unjust economic structures they are guilty of violence toward the have-nots of the world, for covert economic injustice can be every bit as destructive of people as lethal, overt violence.

Thus the Peace Churches, he claims, need to develop a theology of power, which Sider grounds on the eschatological perspective of the Jubilee sermon of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4), the significance of the cross "at the very heart of our commitment to non-violence" (p. 33), the assurance of the empty tomb that the non-violent way "is not an impossible dream, but the way of the future" (p. 96), and the fact that the victory of Christ over the "principalities and powers" is not only an eventual triumph over supernatural spiritual beings but also over the socio-political structures twisted by sinful men.

The book is always thought-provoking and often moving, but one may nevertheless raise some important questions about it. In the first place, it is rather surprising to find in the first chapter, "The Cross and Violence," the traditional texts used to oppose the use of force and in the

second chapter, "Christ and Power," many of the texts given by those who support the recourse to violence. Even granting that Sider talks in one case of "violence" and in the other case of "power," one still finds some incongruity in that a man who so clearly discloses the brutality of the covert violence hidden beyond economic structures says nothing of the harshness that stands behind government regulations. One wonders how he can expect that if a majority of Christian lawmakers were to adopt his program, it could be realized without full execution of the very police power that he rejects.

One may also ask Sider why he advocates so enthusiastically the OT *economic* ideals, but repudiates unequivocally OT principles of justice that other Christians uphold as essential for the preservation of the moral fabric of society. Why does he look so negatively at the *lex talionis* when it clearly states the ideal of modern criminal justice? If he asserts that it is because Jesus rejected the *lex talionis*, while advocating the Jubilee principle, one may ask why we find no echo of that Jubilee ideal in the NT writings dealing with slavery, money, etc.

At times Sider sounds quite dogmatic. "Any rejection of the non-violent way in human relations involves a heretical doctrine of the atonement" (p. 34). His exegesis is not always beyond question. He tells us, e.g., that "'Forgive us our debts' in the Lord's Prayer signifies asking God to forgive His children's sin as they forgive everyone who has debts or loans owing them" (p. 31).

Christians will agree with Sider that the church should take much more seriously its claim of being one body of Christ and that it should transform its approach concerning the distribution of its economic resources. The hope of reshaping the economic structures of the world after a Christian ideal, however, appears terribly unrealistic. This, in fact, is where Sider's theological basis appears to be weakest, since he does not grapple seriously with the problem of human evil—that sinister force which so quickly reduces even the most promising human structures to the old patterns of the mighty exploiting the weak and the rich spoiling the poor. Human structures can never be better than their human agents and, therefore, human structures will be safe only when human hearts have been changed. For that reason, Sider's type of call for new secular economic structures derived from the Bible seems naïve and futile.

While all Christians may not feel that Sider's call for Christian political action should be heeded, they will nevertheless receive from this book a new awareness of God's demands upon them and upon the church.