

are but two sacraments in the Church, and that the Church of the post-Novatian era considered the Eucharist to be the proper sacrament for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. Hence his account of the third-fourth century repentance controversy ignores all mention of sacramental penance. In an otherwise scrupulously documented essay, the reader will note with disappointment the critical section which contends that Cyprian, Hilary, and Ambrose thought the Eucharist a source of remission of

sins; the evidence offered is simply too scanty to support the conclusions the author attempts to draw. Forgiveness of serious post-baptismal sins does indeed involve re-admission to eucharistic communion, yet even in primitive times it was not the Eucharist itself, but sacramental Penance, which effected the reconciliation. The *sancta* in which the Church possesses and confesses *communio* are perhaps more replete than this otherwise admirable essay suggests.

*James Tunstead Burtchaell, C.S.C.*

LETTER ON APOLOGETICS and HISTORY AND DOGMA by Maurice Blondel, translated and presented by Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan. *Harvill Press, 30s.*

This book, rather than being simply a translation of these two works, must be primarily regarded as a presentation of Blondel to the English reader. The introduction in fact comprises very nearly half the whole book, and it is in effect a study of Blondel's thought, his historical position and his importance, which is then illustrated by the two works which have been well chosen and presented to bring out the fundamental characteristic of this great Christian thinker. The first part of the introduction, which concentrates on the philosophical and 'political' context of Blondel's thought, is by Mr Dru; this is followed by a more detailed presentation of the actual principles of his thought, by Fr Trethowan, together with some comments on Blondel's position and influence in one or two particularly controversial areas. The *Letter on Apologetics* which then follows is translated by Illtyd Trethowan, and *History and Dogma* by Alexander Dru.

The two authors (they deserve this title rather than merely that of translators) have done very well to choose this way of presenting Blondel, for his works alone as they stand are not easily assimilable despite the fact that they are a constant witness to realities central to Christian thinking – apart from anything else the style, in startling contrast to the thought, is very dated. (However, Mr Dru's translation – as is usual with him – is alive and reads easily.) A study of Blondel

by itself, however, without his own writings to illustrate it would have been of doubtful value in a country where none of his works exist in translation. To those who already know of the powerful influence of Blondel on many of the foremost theologians of today, it may come as a surprise that this is the first time that he has been translated into English. It is now to be hoped, however, that this book may initiate further translations, and especially one of the better studies on him such as that of Henri Bouillard (Editions du Seuil, 1961).

Maurice Blondel was born at a time when the Church's dynamism was at a low ebb, when a defensive self-concern was drawing her in upon herself. And yet at that same time a spirit was beginning to stir, a movement of self-awareness was already starting; that revival within the Catholic Church had begun which was to lead ultimately, a hundred years later, to the Second Vatican Council. And Blondel can now be seen to be one of the fathers of, and major influences in, that movement. Unfortunately for the Church, as well as for Blondel's popular reputation, the Modernist crisis, coming at his most active period, not only set the movement of revival back, but left many with an impression of Blondel associated simply with an episode that must be regarded as regrettable and is in any case now defunct. And both of these misfortunes were for the same reason, namely that the winning side in that struggle

was not the balanced 'centre', truly traditional, but 'veterism', representing the 'non-historical-dogmatists' and integrists (traditional only in an impoverished sense) aided and abetted (unfortunately but not surprisingly) by the majority of the neothomists (a notable exception being the Louvain school) whose outlook was in sympathy with the quasi-fascist political backers of the anti-modernist movement. (The history of this period, well sketched here by Mr Dru, makes exciting but terrifying reading.)

Whatever the pernicious values involved here, however, they were more subtle and not so blatantly dangerous to the faith as the unbalanced liberalism of the Modernists, which rightly resulted in its condemnation. But the rigid terms of this condemnation (still very much in evidence today) came to Blondel, pious and profoundly loyal churchman as he was, as a deep shock, seeing so well, as he did, that neither extreme truly represented the depth of Christian tradition. He himself represents in fact that realist and dynamic appreciation of Christian life, with God's presence in the Church deeply felt, which has so largely triumphed in the present Council. And in Blondel we can recognize for example the spirit of Augustine, of Pascal and of Kierkegaard. His philosophy is personalist and real; he is one of the first of the genuine existentialists – an existentialism closer, however, to that of Marcel for example, than that of Sartre. And then there is another figure with whom Blondel must be compared: John Henry Newman. It has been

remarked that had Newman been born sixty years later, instead of the *Grammar of Assent*, he would have written Blondel's *L'Action*, and instead of *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, his *History and Dogma* – the second work presented in this volume. The dangers in this way of speaking are recognized, but what is implied is important, namely that this is where Newman can be seen to be aiming, and that Blondel is in a very real way his heir.

*L'Action* was Blondel's major work, but Mr Dru and Fr Trethowan have been right to present us now with the much shorter *Letter on Apologetics*. This not only fits better into their plan, it also presents the philosophical position which was worked out in *L'Action*. And the *Letter* also expresses another profound aspect of his thought – the relationship between nature and the supernatural. His insights in this field largely derive – as does all his philosophy – from his refusal to split man up into unrelated parts, his concern to see man as a whole. He was as a result able to give, even under such difficult circumstances, such a balanced picture of 'the action of the infallible spirit on the Christian community' – or in other words Tradition (see p. 217) – as is to be found in *History and Dogma*. Here perhaps more than anywhere else is evidence of Blondel's 'centrality', and it is here that he must be regarded as an historical witness of the first importance – and one who is at the same time still capable of helping us to achieve the fullness of the Church's revival.

Giles Hibbert, O.P.

THE NEW THEOLOGIANS edited by Russell R. Acheson, *Mowbray*, 5s.

ETHICS by Dietrich Bonhoeffer; *Collins (Fontana)*, 9s. 6d.

EXISTENCE AND FAITH by Rudolf Bultmann. *Collins (Fontana)*, 9s. 6d.

EXISTENTIALISM: FOR AND AGAINST by Paul Roubiczek. *C.U.P.* 22s. 6d., paperback 11s. 6d.

*The New Theologians* is a brief, unpretentious collection of four addresses arranged for the undergraduates of Bristol University by their Anglican chaplain. The addresses were given in response to the interest in their subjects provoked by *Honest to God* and the ensuing discussion. This is true of the subjects of the first three addresses

at least, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Tillich. The fourth, on Teilhard de Chardin, was added 'lest anyone should think that Germans and Protestants have a monopoly of fresh thinking'.

Needless to say, these addresses do not attempt to be exhaustive, not in 46 pages! But, in the limits at their disposal, the four