

origin and formation of the Church but to her first flowering in contact with the society and culture of the greco-roman empire; the liturgical forms of the sacramental life of the Church from apostolic times down to our own; the teaching of Popes, Councils, and theologians down the ages. I do not mean that Fr Schillebeeckx would not, as a theologian, have found a return to the sources necessary if it had not been dictated by his philosophical-theological approach to sacramentality through the existentialist theme of encounter; but merely underline the inner relationship that exists in fact. The book is successful, and engenders an intellectual excitement and enlightenment, because of the power of intellectual unification in the idea of 'encounter' developed by a truly original theological mind.

This is not to say that Fr Schillebeeckx is always successful as a biblical theologian, or in his use of the history of dogma. A fair portion of the more properly biblical examination is given over to a mistaken attempt to harmonize the Lucan and Johannine traditions concerning the time of the sending of the Spirit that leads to an odd theory that the Resurrection is merely the answer of divine mercy to the sacrifice of love, the destruction of the power of sin, while it is in the Ascension that we are to find the glorification of Christ and his investiture as Lord and King. The Resurrection and the Ascension are surely two stages in the glorification of Christ, a glorification often alluded to in the New Testament simply in terms of the Resurrection. There is also a rather involved piece of argumentation about what Christ and the Apostles did or did not determine for the future Church in the constitution of the sacraments that contains the curious statement: 'It must be noted that this (a shift in ecclesial appreciation of the essential rite—my brackets) is possible only if the apostolic determination of the essential rite is not an invariable norm for the Church (in which case it would be an historical fact that the essential rite has changed)'. It is rather, surely, the (hypothetical) change between what was the substance of the rite at one time and what becomes the substance of the rite at another (historical facts) that enables the theologian to say that this was not determined for all time from the beginning. A deduction of facts from theories is just what should be avoided in the realm of history. Fr Schillebeeckx would surely be the first to denounce this as the besetting sin of a certain school of writers of theological manuals.

These are particular failings. The strength of the book proceeds from the genuine confrontation, in a mind thoroughly grounded and formed in scholastic theology, of the Word of God and the thought-world of contemporary philosophical man.

JEROME SMITH, O.P.

THE NEW CREATION, by Herbert McCabe; Sheed and Ward, 10s. 6d.

This sensible little book, collecting together articles that originally appeared in this journal, begins exceeding well: 'Christ is present to us in so far as we are present to each other', says Fr McCabe, echoing a remark of Fr Bouyer about

the eucharist. By the pentecostal activity of the Spirit our babel is ended, every tongue confesses Christ, every man is accepted as a son of the Father. McCabe rightly places our common liturgical experience at the centre of the Christian life. Just as much as the Jews we learn of God as a people.

We learn that God acts in personal relationships with men. 'Philosophy tells us almost nothing about God' since it is empty of people and events. Philosophy makes no call upon us, but God continually calls us to be his messengers to all nations, to bring all men in to share the praise of the living. We have to find ways of speaking to men. McCabe's enthusiasm is communicated in a jaunty dogmatism which has advantages over the old apologetic method but which yet betrays him into pious rhetoric and imprecision (in the use of words like 'poem' or 'symbol' for example), and which sometimes obscures as it dogmatizes. It is inadvisable, I think, to say such things as 'in the Eucharist we have the body of Christ present just precisely in so far as it is symbolised by the appearance of bread, but it is *sacramentally* symbolised and therefore made real'. This loses the sacramental immediacy. It sounds rather like the man who peeled the onion in a search for reality beneath the skin, when the skin was the reality. The eucharist is Christ. 'Symbol' is a dangerous word here, though I grant it can be used, only there must be such qualification as might make it easier to go back to the old 'sign'.

In his twelve-years-old book, *A New Creation*, Fr August Brunner, editor of *Stimmen der Zeit*, began his theology of the Christian life with the words of baptism. So too, McCabe. Brunner was community-minded but had some too individualist moments. So too, McCabe. The discussion of baptism in this book is, paradoxically enough, performed with too great an emphasis on personal commitment by the catechumen. The first essential to be understood about baptism is that it is a community event, socially significant. St Paul speaks of baptism into Christ's Body, into the Church, and uses the plural form: 'We are baptised together with him by baptism into death' so that 'we may also walk in a newness of life'. Fr Winstone, in a paper read at the Practical Liturgy conference at Spode House, September 1962, shewed how the Lenten fast was primarily a fast of all the community with the catechumenate, a social penance for the sins of all who were or would be members of the community. At the same conference Fr Edmund Jones suggested that one of the most necessary changes in the baptismal rite would be in baby-baptism for the god-parents to say 'For him we renounce' or 'We ask for faith', in order that the unreality of a personal commitment by the baby be not pretended. All this points to a conception of baptism as a community event, as the act of Christ in his people.

Certainly the present rite of baptism is adult-orientated, it demands an adult response, and the Church has never authorised a special rite for the baptism of babies. This is the result of the exigencies of the first generation of Christians. Whatever may be the truth of 'together with all her household' and 'Suffer the little children and forbid them not', it is certainly the case that the early Church was composed mainly of adult converts. But Tertullian's opposition shews that

orthodox Catholics were baptising children by the second century. And now it is evident that a theology of baptism which concentrates on adult commitment is unrealistic, the majority of converts are babies, and it is an awkwardness of McCabe's book that it does not treat sufficiently of the majority case, it does not recognise baby-baptism as the paradigm. A paradigm, incidentally, which is brilliantly anti-Pelagian.

We have to put the strongest stress on the part of Christ and the Christian community. In the human order a child is conceived and born whether it will or no, it is brought up by a family not of its own choosing, and at last arrives, at seventeen or so, at the age of reasonable choice. The choice is not about origin but about whether the child will continue to take part in the community life. So also in the fully human order of the Christian life—the unbaptised are not fully human since they do not properly share the capacities that God has willed for his adopted sons—the community, god-parents and priest and teacher, bring the child to life in the font and shew what the Christian life entails in prayer and first communion and confirmation until the time of choice arrives, at seventeen or so, when the child may opt out of or into the Christian community activity, and come freely to the eucharistic celebration or not.

The community responsibility extends beyond the boundaries of European Christendom into the pagan factory and the heathen jungle. We smile too smugly at the thought of Francis Xavier anxious lest men die without his baptising with water, and comfort ourselves with the notion of 'baptism of desire'. But what does such a baptism mean? Surely that as godparents stand round babies and declare the community's desire, so we, members of the universal community, stand round all men and desire baptism for them. There is no salvation outside the Church. Our intercession, as members of the liturgical community, brings men within the Church if they place no obstacle in our way. The Spirit is given because of the prayers of the community. If we do not fulfil our missionary task, if we do not live up to our baptism, if we do not preach in our lives, then how shall other men be saved?

This is, I think, the one place in the book where McCabe has not fully followed through his insights about the nature of the new Chosen People—a people, as he so well says, who have nothing of themselves, are chosen only because of the decision of God and through no merit of their own, a people totally unlike a master race.

The discussion here of penance and marriage is particularly good. It would be an encouraging sign if McCabe were asked to help in the renewal of the marriage rite. His book presages a fine marriage blessing to replace the rather too Hebraic outlook of the present ritual. And he carries through a fine theology of Christian death. He has made proper use of some of Professor Karl Rahner's work about death and the baptised. McCabe makes it clear how it is that we are all baptised into Christ's death, and how we have a responsibility to appropriate death to ourselves, to make it our Christian way, here and now, or else we shall have to do so in purgatory. Sin makes it more difficult to die, we have forsaken our standard

of dying; sin is our refusal to conform to Christ, to die the death of a man who has shared in the eucharist, to die the death of the man who has shewn forth the death of the Lord. The last days of Pope John and his message to the world (curially inflated though it obviously was) shew us the same truth. This is in a double sense a Johannine book, it is concerned with the evangelist's concerns and is motivated by the ideal that characterised the pope's conciliar hope.

HAMISH SWANSTON

STRUCTURES DE L'ÉGLISE, by Hans Küng; Desclée de Brouwer, n.p.

To say that Hans Küng's name is now a 'household word' suggests the harmony of the Good Catholic Family; an impression slightly misleading. But, thinking back to the autumn of 1961, when *The Council and Reunion* first appeared in English, it may be worth recording a purely personal reaction. What impressed me most about that first book was Küng's deep and sensitive charity. It is sad that this charity has been so conspicuously lacking in the discussions that his writings have provoked. The danger this time is that the oversimplification involved in all polemic is likely to delay the theological impact of this book. Whereas Küng's earlier work has been notably 'prophetic' in character, this book is an original and penetrating contribution to ecclesiology. It is carefully and painstakingly written, and only an equal care and delicacy in developing his insights will produce any lasting results.

Most contemporary writing on the Church is concerned to correct the imbalance introduced by an excessively monarchical conception of her essential structure. In biblical theology this concern has given rise to the emphasis on the Church as the People of God, an emphasis taken up in the Vatican Council's draft constitution on the Church. Küng's thesis is that the scientific examination of the Church from this point of view gives rise to a 'conciliar' ecclesiology (to make this claim involves, as will be shown later, laying the ghost of 'conciliarism').

He begins by discussing the possibility of a 'theology of councils'. This is not so straightforward as it might seem. Historically it is difficult to discern a basic pattern to which all general councils conform; membership of the council, convening and ratifying authorities—all these have varied in the past, and it is not possible to regard the present canonical definition of a general council as a statement of theological necessity.

There is a further difficulty. Since general councils are a human institution (i.e., not an element of the divinely given structure of the Church), since, in other words, it is not essential to the existence of the Church that there be general councils, in what sense can they be considered as an object of theological investigation? Küng's answer (by way of some neat etymological work on the relationship between *concilium* and *ecclesia*) is that the Church is the 'ecumenical council called by God', and that the ecumenical council called by *men* is only, but none-