

JOHN HUS' CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH, by Matthew Spinka. *Princeton University Press. London: Oxford University Press. 96s.*

Hus has been typed as another morning star of the Reformation; a Czech nationalist; an early Marxist – in spite of his endorsement of the medieval Three Estates; the first to evolve a real people's liturgy and to attempt to make theology a genuine anthropology for God rather than a metaphysical map of God for man. Professor Spinka is concerned to show that while Hus was very much the child of his own apocalyptic age, he was no mere echo of Wyclif and the ultra-realists, but a battler against the legalism, scepticism and fideism that was corroding the soul of the Church in his time.

It was Cardinal Beran at Vatican II who declared that Czech Catholicism was at present expiating its own bygone sins and the Catholic archivist of the city of Constance, Otto Feger, who recently circulated an appeal for the retrial of Hus. Although the Council of Constance condemned Hus in the first place as a Wycliffite, Spinka agrees with de Vooght that he was orthodox even in his eucharistic teaching, only exposing such frauds as the bleeding host of Wilsnack to which Scots and English pilgrims went along after his death; while his teaching on the Church compares well with that of such of his accuser as claimed that the Church was basically the Roman see, with the pope as mystical head and the cardinals as body; one wonders if the bishops who after Constance changed their style from bishops *benedictione divina to apostolicae sedis gratia* had a similar travesty of the 'fulness of power' in mind. His theory of obedience in neutral acts has been claimed as revolutionary, but it would not have seemed strange to St Thomas, not to mention Fr McKenzie.

Perhaps Dom de Vooght exaggerates the ordinariness of his teaching – camouflaging weak theology by mass citation of authorities is not peculiar to Hus or even to the fifteenth century. His ordinariness was more than matched by the banality of the opposition, some of whom considered, as did later the Cologne civic rulers, that even university men should be protected from the profundities of the *alti sermonis doctores* (such as Thomas and Albert) and at least one

Scots university inquisitor excluded Albertism as perilous.

However, it was not altogether revolutionary for Hus to suggest that there were other apostolic sees besides Rome, and he accepted – where already at least some of the civil lawyers had been doubtful – the fact, if not the utility, of the donation of Constantine. His view (p. 282) that Rome was in no sense 'the eternal city' was, following Augustine, a medieval commonplace, which only the Renaissance papacy eventually dislodged. Yet Hus still maintained that Rome alone possessed universal rule, that the other sees were particular churches, and it is as a typical Catholic that he stands before the Catholic judges at Constance.

Spinka stresses Hus' appreciation of the Church as basically the 'Church of the predestined' as against the juridical corporativism of his opponents, whose texts Spinka examines. It was therefore one with a place for the Spirit, though the danger of thinking in such terms is that the Church of the elect eventually becomes an elite Church, with those who are Christians only by vocation too sharply curtailed off from Christians *de facto* and by witness. Molnar, however, has shown how Hus contributed to a popular liturgical revival and one guesses that spiritual songs as much as new doctrinal slogans helped to advance the Bohemian cause. Constance did not solve such problems, and behind the apocalyptic language of many of the theologians of Basle is a groping for a new theological vocabulary on the part of men anxious that the fire Christ sent on earth should be kindled and not extinguished by worldly considerations; but, like their enemies who said that 'Basle produced a basilisk', they too were prisoners of a basic juridicism. For them too the papacy was 'the supreme canal by which the water of saving doctrine passes as drink to the thirsty faithful' and their problem was that the canal seemed poisoned. They too struggled with the basic problem of 'consensus', a problem that remained insoluble in the terms in which it was customarily stated.

JOHN DURKAN

EVIL AND THE GOD OF LOVE. By John Hick. *Macmillan*; 1966. Pp. xvi – 404. 45s.

This book has been much praised. It even received an enthusiastic review from Philip Toynbee in the columns of *The Observer* – an unusual honour for a book on a theological topic. There are indeed many virtues in the

book. It is admirably lucid, even when it is attempting to describe the views of Existentialist theologians like Karl Barth: the spectacles which Hick provides on these occasions for the reader to peer through at the *massa obscuritatis* under

observation are themselves perfectly transparent. It is a copious book. Everything which Hick wants to say he spells out in full, even at the cost of some repetition. There is no allusiveness. I should warmly recommend the book on these grounds to young students of the Philosophy of Religion, particularly since it has been my experience that such students come to a formal course with this title far less familiar with the classic debates than their teachers are *a priori* inclined to expect.

Its usefulness on this score is partly derived from the large measure of historical survey which is included. The plan of the book is roughly this: Part One is given over to statement of the problem. It is quite short. We pass to a presentation in turn of what Hick regards as the two main strands of Christian thought about the problem of evil. He labels these 'Augustinian' and 'Irenaeian', and they are dealt with in Parts Two and Three respectively. Part Two is by far the longest section of the book. Hick obviously regards the Augustinian type of Theodicy as representing the theological establishment, though he discerns growing signs of disestablishmentarianism even in such unlikely places as books by Roman Catholics. Hick regards himself as standing in the 'Irenaeian' tradition; and the function of Part Three is primarily, perhaps, to show that there is respectable precedent for his own type of Theodicy. This is expounded in Part Four, which is entitled 'A Theodicy for Today' – though why Hick should suppose that modernity is a sign of excellence in this field is hard to make out. He is on the whole remarkably free from the contemporary prejudice which assumes that theologians of earlier centuries were incapable of providing adult solutions for adult problems.

A warning is perhaps necessary to those who would look on the historical parts of the book as a balanced survey of the development of Christian Theodicy. There is an alarming amount of telescoping. In the chapter entitled 'Catholic Thought from Augustine to the Present Day' we pass from a glance at Hugh of St Victor to a discussion of Aquinas, and from there by a prodigious leap to Cardinal Journet. What has happened to the later mediaeval theologians? What has happened to Molina and Bañez and the *Congregatio de Auxiliis*? Furthermore, it is not entirely happy to place together Aquinas, Calvin and Leibniz in the same category as 'Augustinians'. The introduction of names as labels in philosophical discussion is only really permissible when a given philosopher

has come out with some original, unexpected and probably perverse doctrine on a particular topic. There is thus unequivocally a Humian doctrine of personal identity. But is there in this sense an Augustinian doctrine of Evil? Augustine had so much to say on the subject that one would scarcely be surprised to find some foretaste of everything that any Christian theologian had ever said on Theodicy in those massive and endless volumes of the Patrology that present the works of Aurelius Augustinus. To attribute the origin of Leibniz's thinking on this subject to Augustine is unobjectionable, though perhaps uninteresting: to attribute the origin of Schleiermacher's thinking to Irenaeus is more startling. I am not well acquainted with the works of either of these theologians, and should accordingly keep my suspicions to myself. But (inevitably) is it really fair to see in the Irenaeian distinction between 'image' and 'likeness' a denial of the original sinlessness of Man, rather than an incipient feeling for the contrast between nature and grace? I think Hick's claim that the tradition of Christian theology falls naturally into these two categories, the Augustinian and the Irenaeian, needs to be taken with a pinch of salt, if it is proposed as serious history and not as a mere expository device.

Hick's own views on this subject constitute the most important and interesting part of the book. They are best described as consisting of two points of rejection and one of acceptance, though this is of course to distort them by condensation. The first point of rejection is a denial of the possibility of understanding the biblical story of the Fall as an historical account. By this Hick does not merely mean only to insist on the mythical character of such details of the account as are provided by the various trees and the serpent and the realization of nakedness; he refuses to allow that there was, as a matter of history, a time when human beings existed in a state of sinlessness and happiness, in which state mankind was originally created by God. He holds that such a belief is made impossible by 'modern science' (p. 323 *et passim*), presumably in the same way as science has made impossible belief in a geocentric universe or a beginning of the world in 4004 B.C. It seems to me extremely doubtful whether one can say that the relevant science, which I take to be Palaeontology, could disprove the bare fundamentals of the Genesis story as depicting an historical Fall. To affirm that the evolutionary process was interrupted, or transformed, for a very short space of time for no more than one or two individuals, is hardly

enough to cast doubt on the account of the emergence of the human race given by these scientists, which deals, surely, in great historical sweeps that would make accurate dating possibly only to within a margin of hundreds, if not thousands, of years? It seems to me that Hick is here admitting the claims of 'modern science' with too little examination.

But Hick does not think it would help much if we were able to believe in an historical Fall. For he regards any Theodicy which attempts to attribute the ultimate responsibility for evil to misuse of free will as doomed to failure because of certain philosophical objections. To assert that entirely good beings, with no evil tendencies and with clear knowledge of what they were doing, freely opted for the evil rather than the good is, he maintains, besides being intrinsically unintelligible, nothing less than the assertion that evil was here created *ex nihilo*; and to assert this is to deny the uniqueness of God as Creator and to fall into dualism. It seems to me that, though Hick several times goes over this ground, he always goes over it too fast. Is it the case that a choice that proceeded from no in-built flaw of character would be an entirely random event, and not properly a choice at all? Is it the case that an evil choice, if in no way caused by circumstances for which God is ultimately responsible, would give rise to something which could be said to be created *ex nihilo*? In answer to the first question it does not seem to me that we regard every act that is totally 'out of character' as random and therefore unintentional. In answer to the second question it seems doubtful whether any *thing* (Aristotelian first substance) which could be brought into existence by the action of a free being could itself be evil. ('The streptococcus is the test', I suppose.) But the bringing into existence of some *state* of a thing, which state might itself be evil, does not amount to creation *ex nihilo*. Hick shows up rather badly here, I think, as a *philosopher*: there is not enough investigation of what precisely is being asserted, there is not enough examination of test cases, there is too much taking for granted that everybody has a perfectly clear idea of what *creation*, or some other difficult concept, contains.

BODY, SOUL, SPIRIT: A SURVEY OF THE BODY-MIND PROBLEM. By C. A. Van Peursen, translated by H. H. Hoskins. OUP, 1966. 30s.

This is the most useful survey I have come across of the body-mind problem; it is more remarkable, as one would expect from its author's modest introduction, for its correct and lucid summaries of the principal theories which have

To turn to what I have called Hick's 'point of acceptance'. This is the 'vale of soul-making' apologetic. One of his recurrent themes is that Theodicy must look, not to the past, as does the traditional theology of the Fall of Man, but to the future. Hick's theodicy (like his doctrine of the existence of God) is eschatological. It is as the necessary prelude to a life culminating in a full personal relationship with God that we must see the sin and suffering that besets our present existence. Those who send their sons to school intend them to meet hardship and the unpleasant side of discipline. And in an analogous way the evils of this life are actually *intended* for us by God. But there are some schools to which no decent parent would send his son; and it is hard to believe that this world, if a school, is not a school of this sort. I am not one to belittle the horrors of cross-country running, but I regard it as absurd to put lung cancer and dementia precox into the same category.

In so far as I know the difference between Theology and Philosophy I would say that his 'point of acceptance' is argued theologically, and his second 'point of rejection' (which is the important one) is argued philosophically. I am more impressed by his theological than by his philosophical argument. His exposition of the 'vale of soul-making' line is, I think, the best that I have met. But I still do not find it convincing. It is with relief, therefore, that I return to the Augustinian ways of thinking from which his philosophical artillery is not heavy enough to shift me.

It has been difficult to select, out of so full a treatment of this perennial problem, the few points which are all that could be discussed in a review. The high quality of Hick's work is evident from the large number of interesting topics which competed for discussion. My selection of minor errors for commemoration must be still more arbitrary: p. 64, 'conscience' for 'consciousness'; p. 187, 'O.P.' for 'O. Praem.'; p. 265, 'Eastern' for 'Easter'; p. 317 'etsi' translated as 'as if'; p. 374 'discensus ad infernos' for 'descendit ad inferos'; p. 392, 'Corinth' for 'Colossae'.

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been advanced than for original thought on the subject.

After a preliminary chapter, the rather extreme dualism of Descartes and Plato is set out, and Plato commended for his sketch of a