

'One must overcome history with dogma'.

The recognition of the problem of doctrinal development within what claims to be a tradition of consistent evangelical truth is not new, of course. It was examined explicitly by Peter Abelard in the twelfth century, and it has been a major theme in theology for more than a century since the work of Möhler and Newman. Newman approached the problem in the polemical context of discovering which of the Christian churches was in direct continuity with the apostolic church. Pelikan's reason for examining the presuppositions and methodology of historical theology is less contentious but perhaps no less difficult; he has begun to write a projected five-part history of Christian doctrine. Here lies the chief purpose of this book; it is not the self-contained work it pretends to be, but a theological introduction to this enormous task. Not surprisingly, the book is very well documented; the 172 pages of text contain 1,116 footnotes.

Harnack is the figure lying behind this work and it is against him that the author continually orients himself. But Pelikan refuses to limit himself to a small number of key dogmas and their development in a given period as Harnack did, for he sees the necessity of inter-relating the whole range of doctrine in order to understand any one dogma at any given moment, so that, for example, Luther's view of the eucharist can only be understood when it is related to his theology of justification, of *sola scriptura*, of church authority, and so on. It must be doubted, however, whether Pelikan, or any

other single historian of theology, can remain true to all the methodological requirements which are discussed in this book while covering the whole of nineteen centuries of doctrinal development. What is required of any new history of doctrine, on the basis of Pelikan's redefinition of the task of historical theology, is not only the historiography of *one* theological motif through nineteen centuries (a method advocated by Nygren and others at the University of Lund), not only the historiography of *all* theological motifs through nineteen centuries, not only the *inter-relation* of all motifs at any given time, but a combination of all these. The task is daunting, but the author quotes Stephen Runciman in support of such an undertaking: 'A single author . . . may succeed in giving to his work an integrated and even epical quality that no composite volume can achieve. I believe that the supreme duty of the historian is . . . to attempt to record in one sweeping sequence the greater events and movements that have swayed the destinies of man. The writer rash enough to make the attempt should not be criticized for his ambition, however much he may deserve censure for the inadequacy of his equipment or the inanity of his results.' In the light of the book under review I cannot help feeling that the resultant history of doctrine will be both a considerable achievement and a disappointment. At any rate anyone who intends reading even a part of the as yet incomplete history had better first read this methodological discussion.

GEOFFREY TURNER

WHY PRIESTS?, by Hans Küng. *Fontana*, 1972. 35p. (PRETRE, POUR QUOI FAIRE?, *Cerf*, Paris, 1971.)

In his foreword, Father Küng looked forward with apprehension to last year's Synod, doubting its ability to deal with what he saw as a catastrophic crisis in the Catholic priesthood. The book is dedicated to his fellow-priests; his wish is that it should be seen primarily as a work of construction, not destruction, even though traditional features of the priesthood are found useless and thrown away. The positive, biblical picture will be generally acceptable: the Christian minister is an officially and sacramentally (though Küng has more to say about sacraments, an effective gesture and prayer of the Church is involved) appointed leader of the community, preacher of God's word and celebrant of the sacraments. The list of obsolete cargo for jettisoning is more questionable: not only does a sacral and ritual

priesthood go but also a sacrificing priesthood, for the eucharist is not itself a sacrifice and possibly not instituted by Christ. Priesthood as *sacerdotium* goes out, and with it sacramental character, sacramental grace and any grace of state.

Most, if not all, of this could have been predicted out of Küng's work on the ministry in his book *The Church* taken with his later work on infallibility. It is just as well that this is so, in that this latest book is strong in assertion but weak in evidences, full of sweeping conclusions but empty of the detailed arguments and citations necessary to sustain them. It is a 'popular' book with few references to Scripture and no precise references to contemporary exegesis. Küng's reports on exegetical work have often tended to abstraction and rigidity;

without them he can be doctrinaire and propagandist. This is the more damaging in that his theological method has been moving in the direction of a New Testament fundamentalism. It is axiomatic for him that all later developments of church tradition are in principle reversible, p. 53. Granted that, the need to read the New Testament evidences aright is absolute, and the temptation to set up a canon within the canon to be resisted absolutely, as Küng once knew.

Küng plainly states his belief that every Christian is, in principle, able to celebrate both baptism and eucharist without benefit of ordination or deputation. This position is perhaps to be linked with his belief that Christ's institution of the sacrament of ordination is an open question. It is true that the New Testament does not present us directly with presbyteral celebrants of the eucharist, but it is

difficult to believe that the presbyters of the Pastorals were not leaders in Christian worship. And surely we must distinguish between institution by Jesus of Nazareth this side of the tomb and institution by Christ who is the Lord active throughout the New Testament?

Or take Küng's preference for Paul as an exemplar of ministry explicitly over against Peter, who is always presented in the New Testament as a defaulter and denier, p. 114. This seems to miss the whole point of the placing of John 21, 15-19, and to leave the first part of Acts out of account entirely. Küng presumably has Gal. 2, 11ff in mind; but surely a 'defaulting' minister who repents of his default provides a very useful exemplar?

All in all, *Why Priests?* will be found useful more for the questions it raises than for the solutions it offers.

JEROME SMITH, O.P.

YOUR CHILD AND RELIGION, by Johanna Klink, trans. R. A. Wilson. *S.C.M.*, 1972. 247 pp. £1.95.
THE CHRISTIAN IN EDUCATION, by Colin Alves. *S.C.M.*, 1972. Paperback. 127 pp. 50p.

Dr Klink's book is subtly woven from several strands. There is a wonderful variety of quotations from children from the ages of three to twelve (with the earlier years predominating). Interspersed with these children's voices there is a rich anthology from adults, whether anonymous parents, professional educators, or other writers who have reflected with insight on the mystery of childhood, their own or that of others. This is drawn from the whole tradition of European literature from Plato and Augustine to Sartre and Buber. These sections alone, with telling extracts often ironically juxtaposed without comment, would make the book well worth reading. Apart from the more illustrious names, it is good to see an appreciation of such writers as H. C. Rümke and Frances Wickes. The general tone of these observations is quietly sympathetic, if often, perhaps inevitably, a little sad. (Connoisseurs of vituperation, however, should not miss the splendid outburst from Frederik van Eeden quoted on p. 185.) These various elements are skilfully combined into a most convincing and eloquent whole by Dr Klink's own contribution.

She protests that her book 'has no scholarly pretensions'. It is true that many authors are quoted without detailed references; there is also no index. These are minor irritations. But if scholarship depends as much on a gift for asking the right questions and a sense of where to look for the answers as on the diligent gleaning of other men's thoughts, Dr Klink is

too modest. Of course, her approach has limitations; she makes no secret of them. Her own thinking is based on the Bible; underlying it all is the question, 'In what way can you pass on to your children something of your own faith, or bring them into contact with Christian faith?' (p. 213). But it would be foolish to dismiss this book as just one more example of the old-style confessional handbook. She is, above all, deeply concerned with 'the theology of children': 'The purpose of this book has been to draw attention to the importance of taking children seriously in this respect, and of not brushing aside their "theology" too hastily on the grounds that "it is not their own"' (p. 238).

Your Child and Religion will come home to many as an accusation. Here is a little girl playing at being a priest and giving a sermon: 'People, you must be nice to each other. Anyone who believes in people believes in God. Anyone who doesn't believe in people doesn't believe in God. That's the end of the sermon' (p. 196). It is the children, Dr Klink points out, who so often have the initiative. 'Just because of God's invisibility and mysterious presence, the child is fascinated by him. He goes on asking, and without his parents having anticipated or wished it, they find themselves once again treading the hard path of theology' (p. 82). With penetrating simplicity Dr Klink exposes many of our cherished evasions and follies—the identification of God with the voice of conscience, and the threat of