

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-

theless truly, a 'representation', a microcosm of the divine council. This thesis has been questioned on the grounds that, since the human council is only the gathering of the teaching Church, it cannot adequately represent the whole Church. In reply, Küng quotes Scheffczyk to the effect that the human council is not simply an image of the teaching Church, but rather of 'the Church teaching herself' (cf. p. 121, n. 1). This raises the question of lay participation in general councils, to which Küng devotes an excellent chapter, in which he gives full value to the Lutheran insights, while in no way minimizing the deficiencies of the Lutheran position. (From the point of view of English readers, the ecumenical significance of the book is somewhat lessened by the fact that Küng is engaged in dialogue with the German Lutherans, and the very lengthy analyses of Lutheran theology cannot be of such immediate importance in this country).

As the book develops, the central problems that Küng discusses fit rather loosely into his general framework of a mutual comparison of the divine and human councils. In chapter five, on 'Church, Council and Laity', the emphasis is on the theology of councils, whereas in chapter six, 'Council and Ministers', the emphasis is on the nature of the ministry in the Church as a whole. Nevertheless there is a controlling unity in the book which makes it more than simply a collection of essays.

The two most important sections are those on the theology of the ministry, and on the ministry of Peter in Church and council.

Chapter six opens with a sixty-page analysis of the Lutheran theology of ministry (his trenchant criticisms of its inadequacy should placate the fears of those who suspect him of 'leaning over backwards to please the Protestants'). Starting from the fact that the ministry must always be seen *within* the Church, he shows that the apostolic succession must first be a question of the apostolicity of the Church, and only then of an apostolicity of her ministry. This leads him to the most important and original suggestion in the book. Is it possible that, in abnormal cases, the ministry can be conferred by means other than an episcopal laying-on of hands? 'Il a fallu la situation nouvelle, créée par la rencontre existentielle (et non seulement hypothétique) avec des hommes d'autres continents à l'époque des grandes découvertes, pour saisir dans toute sa portée le moyen extraordinaire (défini sans appel à Trente) d'accès au christianisme (baptismus in voto . . .), alors que cette doctrine avait été exprimée depuis longtemps déjà, depuis environs le xiie siècle. Peut-être faut-il la situation nouvelle, créée par la rencontre existentielle (et non seulement hypothétique) avec des hommes d'autres confessions chrétiennes à l'époque du mouvement oecuménique, pour percevoir en un clin d'œil le chemin extraordinaire vers le ministère (ordo in voto, comme on pourrait le désigner très approximativement)?' (p. 244.) Rightly, he will not answer his own question—'Non seulement parce que, pour être sérieuse, cette réponse exigerait tout un gros livre, mais aussi et surtout parce que cette réponse n'est pas mûre dans la théologie catholique; il n'y a aucune honte à cela, mais plutôt ce peut être un motif d'espérer' (p. 239).

The full implications of his question are clear when it is related to two other

questions much discussed at the moment, namely, the sacramental significance of eucharistic celebrations by non-Catholic Christians without valid orders and the ecclesial significance of non-Catholic Christian communities as communities. Once the question has been raised, it cannot be ignored.

The chapter on the ministry of Peter raises the thorny problem of the possibility of a conflict between Pope and Council, or between the Pope and the rest of the Church. Karl Rahner has answered this by an appeal to the intervention of the Holy Spirit in the event of an emergency (cf. *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, pp. 131-132). This seems to smack of the *deus ex machina*, and appears to be in direct opposition to Küng's position, reached after a careful examination of the situation at the Council of Constance (the recognition by Catholic historians today of Constance as ecumenical in all its stages is the background to Küng's treatment). But Rahner allows the right of a bishop (or Council) to protest against immoral legislation by the Pope. He does not develop this; but if it be allowed that this 'protest' cannot be limited to mere words but must, if it is to have any real significance at all, extend to some form of effective action, then his position is perhaps not so far from that of Küng as might appear at first sight. 'Conciliarism' and 'papal absolutism' are mutually opposed doctrinal errors. It must be possible for the Church to recognise, and to cope with either of these errors when they emerge in the practical conduct of her affairs. There would seem to be no difficulty in accepting Küng's conclusions, once the position of Constance as complementary to Vatican I gains general recognition.

This book should establish further Küng's reputation as a theologian of the highest calibre. It is courageous, objective and immensely erudite; his intention is to provoke, not agreement, but thought. 'Aujourd'hui la tâche de la théologie devrait être de restituer aux structures originelles, le libre jeu que les vicissitudes des temps ont jeté dans l'ombre et dans l'oubli . . . Il y a des livres qui ferment la porte aux problèmes, et il y a des livres qui ouvrent la porte aux problèmes. Fermer la porte aux problèmes peut être plus lénifiant. Leur ouvrir la porte est plus fécond, et d'ailleurs plus difficile' (p. 449).

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