

IN PURSUIT OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, by William Kuhns. *Burns and Oates*, London, 1967. 314 pp. 60s.

Mr Kuhns has done a thorough job. His description of Bonhoeffer's theological development is conducted in harness with a biographical account which makes it possible to comprehend how Bonhoeffer came to his conception of the Christian life. Mr Kuhns' method makes it possible, also, to understand why this notorious propounder of a religionless Christianity should be so much read by Roman Catholics. His experiences of the Lutheran and Confessing Churches, his involvement with Bishop Bell in the oecumenical movement, and his commitment to political opposition in Nazi Germany, determined the progress of his theologizing. He did his thinking 'in the round'.

Bonhoeffer was impatient with the monumental Hellenistic effort to take account of person and nature, of divine and human, not simply because of its metaphysical character but because it took no note of the New Testament proclamation of God as man. From this there grew his ecclesiology.

For Bonhoeffer there was but One Church. The Church is the world acknowledging the call of Christ to share his service, and through this response coming to its proper maturity and universality. Those men who are now called 'the Church' have to be the growing point of the world and demonstrate this life of service:

The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity. As a fresh start she should give away all her endowments to the poor and needy. . . . She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others.

Recent Popes have made much of similar themes of services, but Bonhoeffer was not suggesting an institutional service, for this would almost necessarily be based on Christian answers to the world's questions and Christ's work, Bonhoeffer was sure, is 'not a solution but a redemption'. Christ was not interested in

'the universally valid' but rather in 'that which is of help to the real and concrete human being', and now the Church must step into history up to its neck.

A concern for the concrete must, Bonhoeffer thought, characterize the authority of the Church. He thought it impossible for any Christian to 'have' authority, but the Church could act 'under authority' if it first took pains to appreciate the realities of a particular situation and responded with 'a command which speaks in terms of that situation'. If the command were not for the situation then there could be no authority. Mr Kuhns comments on this notion of authority in the Church: 'Catholics, especially recently, can sense the critical discrepancy between a pope's command and the relevance of that command to present needs', and this discrepancy raises 'questions of a similar nature to those which Bonhoeffer was raising'. There is something in this. The great Bishop Bekkers of 'sHertogenbosch remarked at the end of his life:

I reproach our Church with something and I don't know whether this reproach holds good, although it still seems justified at present. It is that there is still an official teaching, based on the past and with hardly any changes; and yet we tell people: if, in conscience, you decide you may do otherwise, God will understand. We have, therefore, an official doctrine of principles and a practical rule for people who cannot apply them and who would be simply irresponsible if they did apply them. And when they do not apply those official principles but act according to their good intentions God will obviously understand and be merciful. Thus you get a double morality, and I believe that we must never accept that.

These are difficult matters but such questioning is evidently relevant to our concrete situation.

HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

ON THE BOUNDARY, by Paul Tillich. *Collins*, London, 1967. 98 pp. 18s.
PERSPECTIVES ON NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY PROTESTANT THEOLOGY, by Paul Tillich. *SCM Press*, London, 1967. 252 pp. 35s.

Both these books, each in its own way, are autobiographical in the best sense of the word. *On the Boundary* is an autobiographical sketch which originally appeared as the first part of Tillich's *Interpretation of History*. In this sketch the late Prof. Tillich gives a most lucid and

moving expression of the dialectic of his existence. Written as he was approaching fifty and in the early days of his exile in the United States, it has added poignancy today after his death as his own evaluation of his life and thought. As he himself puts it in the last words

of the book: 'There remains a boundary for human activity which is no longer a boundary between two possibilities but rather a limit set on everything finite by that which transcends all human possibilities, the Eternal. In its presence, even the very center of our being is only a boundary and our highest level of accomplishment is fragmentary.' In the book itself Tillich spells out some of the boundary situations of his life and thought as, for instance, between social classes, between heteronomy and autonomy, theology and philosophy, Church and Society, Lutheranism and Socialism, Idealism and Marxism. In doing so, he throws a great deal of light on the whole of his personal and intellectual development and thus provides the reader with one of the best introductions to his work and thought. For as he himself states: 'At almost every point, I have had to stand between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither and to take no definitive stand against either. Since thinking presupposes receptiveness to new possibilities, this position is fruitful for thought; but it is difficult and dangerous in life, which again and again demands decisions and thus the exclusion of alternatives. This disposition and its tension have determined both my destiny and my work.' Professor Heywood Thomas in his introduction to the book brings Tillich's own unfinished story to its close and points out that this slim volume will quickly and easily give even the reader who has never read any of

Tillich's work a real appreciation of his 'peculiar style of theological thinking. This is because his thinking was to a remarkable degree autobiographical.'

Perspectives on nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant Theology is the first major work by Tillich published posthumously. It represents a set of lectures delivered by Tillich in 1963. This work is again 'autobiographical' in the sense that it gives a brilliant introduction not only to the leading developments of modern thought but also into the sources of Tillich's own constructive thinking. At first reading it may give the impression of being a rather superficial and over-simplified summary of the philosophical and theological movements from the Enlightenment to Existentialism. But on deeper reflection it will be seen to possess the simplicity of genius arising out of the sureness of insight into the essential points and basic relationships. With its most valuable Introduction by Carl E. Braaten on 'Paul Tillich and the Classical Christian Tradition', it is a 'must' for all serious students both of the Protestant Tradition and of Tillich himself.

In fact, both these works will provide worthwhile reading for all those who are getting rather tired of the vagueness of contemporary 'journalistic' theology and who are interested in the history of constructive theological thought whatever their own tradition. For only in this way can we really understand our present situation.

KARL-H. KRUGER

KIERKEGAARD ON CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN COHERENCE, by Paul Sponheim. *SCM Press*, London, 1968. 332 pp. 70s.

It is about time that the identification of Kierkegaard as the 'father of modern existentialism' was corrected, or rather enlarged, to take account of the coherence, subtlety and catholicity of his thought, and it is this type of corrective which Mr Sponheim's study provides. The burden of his work is to point out that Kierkegaard is more of a systematic theologian than has been realized hitherto, and the result is a full-scale study of the content of Kierkegaard's theology of a kind, so the author claims, that distinguishes this book from most other books in English about Kierkegaard.

Of central importance are the instruments which are used to probe the writings of Kierkegaard: these are the contrary notions of the rhythms of *diastasis* and *synthesis*, an emphasis on withdrawal to stress the separate-

ness of God and man on the one hand, and relatedness to stress their coinvolvement on the other. Using these probes we then range from the matrix of Kierkegaard's thought and even the relevance of the details of his life in understanding his thought, through his treatment of God and man, a major portion of the book, to his treatment of the Christ, the actuality, efficacy and possibility of the God-man realized in history as Jesus of Nazareth. In all of these stages, the rhythms of *diastasis* and *synthesis* are seen each to be justifiable by reference to Kierkegaard's writings—of which the book is copiously full—but *diastasis* 'wins' more often than not—a predictable result in view of Kierkegaard's importance as an existential thinker. And where neither wins, we find not a resolution but a paradox. The