

light of faith on the mystery of the Church. It is a book to be read slowly and pondered because although it has many references it really is a meditation. Fr de Lubac selects thirty key themes, draws on the teaching of the Fathers and the theologians and then unfolds in a slow, ever-deepening development its traditional content. Few living writers combine in so marked a degree patristic learning, scholastic analysis and sensitivity towards modern problems. Fr de Lubac is at once an acute theologian working in the tradition of the Church and a wide-awake contemporary.

The book, with its countless illuminating notes and pregnant implications, deals with the Church as the house of God and the promise of the Kingdom. She is the kingdom in embryo and thus points beyond her present state to that in which sacrament will give place to definitive reality. She is the Body of Christ, not a mere metaphorical entity, but the perceptible sign of a hidden reality, an organism that we can touch and see that is none the less a mystery. She is both the light of the world and, in her human condition, the testing ground of faith. The book with its subtle, civilized and intensely apostolic content must be read and re-read if one is to appreciate the meditations of one of the finest theological minds of our generation.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH. By W. A. Visser 't Hooft. (S.C.M. Press; 12s. 6d.)

This book consists of the Dale Lectures for 1955 given by Dr Visser 't Hooft, the General Secretary to the World Council of Churches. They are of great interest as they give a clear picture of the view of the Church taken by one who for many years has spent his life in the service of the Ecumenical Movement. Dr Visser 't Hooft begins by making a distinction between the *Una Sancta*, which needs no renewal, and the *ecclesia peccatorum* that is in constant need of renewal.

In order to elucidate the concept of 'renewal' he turns to Holy Scripture. Under the Old Covenant Israel was created as a holy people whose whole being consisted in the service of God. This is Israel's vocation, and it is one that she constantly failed to answer, either by her desire to be as the Gentiles or by an idolatrous piety that seeks to limit God to the petty confines of human ideals and expectations. Towards this people God shows his mercy through the voice of the Prophets calling them to repentance.

In the New Testament a New Age begins with Christ so that man, and the people, are renewed before God. Yet it is also clear that renewal, though real and effective, is a dynamic concept; it is there, yet requires constant renewal until the end is come. The Church, in

other words, stands under the constant discipline and chastening of God.

Renewal, then, as an operative element in Christian life consists in exposing oneself to the life-giving work of God.

Dr Visser 't Hooft is clear that Christ has come as a great high priest to sympathize and support, but he also seems quite certain that apart from this 'the spiritual and sacramental gifts which the people in the desert received were fundamentally the same as those which have been granted to the new people'. One might argue for long over the 'apart' and the 'fundamentally'; but leaving that aside it is surely quite wrong to confuse the typical experience of the Old Testament (however important for our instruction) with the presence in the flesh of Christ, and the whole miracle of renewal through that flesh. If the Old Testament is the story of man's failure before God, the New is the story of how man in his failure is made one body with Christ.

If it be objected that St Paul constantly talked of renewal, it can be replied that he also talked of the strength of faith and charity. It is, of course, true that the Church is always renewing herself in persecution and in repentance before God. But why the 'Roman Church' should be unable to do this radically because she is so 'institutional' is beyond the reviewer.

The people were recalled by the mouth of the prophet, who was himself the mouthpiece of God. The ministry of the Word, a Spirit-conditioned gift, is exercised by the Bishop witnessing. But, it is objected, he is an official. Well, so was every one of the Apostles. The comparatively unimportant question of the shape organization takes in each age must be distinguished from the witnessing office of the successors of the Apostles.

It does not appear very sensible to say that institutional authority is wrong because it is unbiblical (*pace* at least St Matthew's Gospel, the Book of Acts and the letters to the Corinthians) and then to say that it is unbiblical to say that the Word is opposed to the Spirit. Both the teaching Church and the recorded Word of God confront man and impose a shape on his believing. This does not make it of no value. What the Catholic says is that the shape is God's and part of our renewal consists in living this shape—putting on the person of Christ. Living it means living it by and in the Holy Spirit which by the royal power of Christ makes even of water and bread a new life and a foretaste of the fullness of the Kingdom.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN MODERN RESEARCH. By Herbert F. Hahn.
(S.C.M. Press; 16s.)

EARLY ISRAEL IN RECENT HISTORICAL WRITING. By John Bright.
(S.C.M. Press; 9s. 6d.)