

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