

importance of the synthesis rhythm is to help us to arrive at the paradox in a more honest and thorough-going way than is often done.

As mentioned above, the core of the work is its two sections on God and man and on the Christ. The diastasis rhythm characterizing the polarity of God and man shows itself as a polarity of eternal and temporal, but Mr Sponheim points out to us Kierkegaard's 'really quite remarkable awareness that the metaphysical distinction did not lie at the heart of the matter: 'If the difference is infinite between God, who is in the heaven, and you, who are on earth: the difference is infinitely greater between the Holy and the sinner''.' Not only this, but there is in Kierkegaard an important and perhaps surprising rhythm of synthesis in his treatment of God and man, where the self's life is placed in a social matrix: 'Every individual is essentially interested in the history of all other individuals, yea, just as essentially as in his own. Perfection in oneself therefore means participation in the whole' (quotation from Kierkegaard). When the rhythms of diastasis and synthesis are juxtaposed, Mr Sponheim suggests that the concepts of human freedom (over against divine omnipotence) and love (over against God) are born. But this love demands something of man and 'Woe be to him, if omnipotence turns against him' (Kierkegaard). Here are discernible diastasis and synthesis, to the extent of not only juxtaposition but living interpenetration.

At that point is introduced God's ideal for man, in its formal and material determinations. The nature of the ideal is such that 'Man not merely *can* choose . . . he *must* choose . . . for in such a way God holds himself in honour, while he also has a fatherly concern for man' (Kierkegaard). Mr Sponheim claims that here the rhythms are not resolved but lead to the

paradox that man exists before God. The analogue of this paradox in the material determination of the ideal is that man must serve God, but cannot. And so we go on to Kierkegaard's Christology, the analysis of which is seen to follow the same sort of pattern as the treatment of God and man, the paradox for example being mirrored in the fact that Christ loved with a *divine* love which we must *imitate*: 'Christ loved in the power of the divine understanding of what love is, he loved the whole race . . . his whole life was an awful collision with the merely human understanding of what love is', and 'there is a pattern who is the fulfilment of the law and whom we must imitate' (K.). Some of the reasoning in this central part of the book is difficult—perhaps inevitably so, considering the problem of tracing the systematic in some of the thought of Kierkegaard which verges on the self-contradictory.

In discussing the legacy of Kierkegaard's thought, the layman is on slightly more familiar ground. Some time is spent indicating the perils of the prospect of a polarized understanding of man; for example, we read of Sartre: 'Knowing no God who places man in a condition of relational necessity, Sartre conceives freedom in a way which involves a second dimension of arbitrariness.' Jaspers and Marcel, Camus and Heidegger, Barth, Tillich and Robinson are all referred to under 'the dominance of the diastatic', and there is even a reference to Saul Bellow. The book ends by expressing the hope that the Kierkegaardian final emphasis on coherence may show us a way out of the polarization of our time, and prevail against 'those forces which imperil our existence and erode our well-being'.

LEWIS RYDER

**THE STRUCTURE OF CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE**, by John B. Cobb. *Lutterworth*, London. 156 pp. 42s.

Dr Cobb teaches at Claremont in Southern California and is one of the growing American school of 'process theologians'. He is known as the author of a substantial natural theology which used Whiteheadian concepts in a systematic way. On the whole, the members of this school have remained talking where their Master stood, in the market-place of the Philosophers, but this essay is a foray into the coffee-house of the Historians. It is odd that—in a group which concerns itself so centrally with the significance of sequence and change—

he should be something of a pioneer. Unfortunately, however, he did not stay for any length of time to talk with historians; the conversation of Messrs Cox, Altizer and Koestler on the pavement outside was too fascinating in its sweep and bite.

The thesis of the essay is nonetheless important. To compare forms of practical 'religiosity' is to let through your net Jesus of Nazareth and Karl Marx; 'comparative religion' can be a notoriously non-communicative analysis of words; and the 'history of ideas' seems to miss

out the inwardness of a specific man's experience of God. Let us rather talk of 'structures of existence' that are open to men. We have a plurality of such 'structures', e.g. the Buddhist, the Christian, the Socratic, and each is a 'peculiar and, in its own terms, ideal embodiment of human possibility'. But the eight structures which are distinguished, and whose features are delineated in the body of the book, have not always been available. There have been millions of men who, however intelligent or good, *could* not have lived from within, say, the Christian structure of existence. There are 'thresholds' which have to be crossed into communities of distinctly different structures of human possibility. It is important, for example, to determine the stage at which sensory experience is perceived and ordered (or not) through symbols, or whether one is able to speak of a conscious 'seat of existence' in an individual. In the end, one is left with a mode of analysis that is almost a Darwinian discourse on the physiology of differentiated species of human nature and values.

What Dr Cobb is driving toward all the time is the question of the 'finality of Christ', and whether the Christian mutant is in fact fitted to survive. He is eloquent, and remarkably honest and subtle, on this theme—though

distinctly élitist.

But here three reservations about the whole essay are brought to a head. First, we gather that Buddhism is likely to go under because industrialization equals westernization equals personal drive and responsibility. But if these 'structures of experience' are so simply dependent on the arrangements of economic life, it is strange that these arrangements, and the other raw materials of professional historiography, should have been so neglected in other chapters of the essay.

Second, it is equally odd that Marxism should not take its place as a valid 'structure of existence'—and that patristic Christianity should be assumed to be representative as well as normative.

Third (though Dr Cobb does indicate he is about to publish a Christology), it does seem more difficult than he concedes to write a dispassionate 'scientific' survey of human 'structures of existence' and at the same time remain ambiguous about the status of phrases like 'God's initiative' and 'the resurrection' when writing of the Prophetic and Christian structures.

He does, however, know what theological conversation should now be about.

J. S. NURSER

EXPERIENCE OF LITURGY, edited by Oliver and Ianthe Pratt. *Sheed and Ward*, London, 1968. 184 pp. 13s. 6d.

LE TEMPS DE LA LITURGIE EST-IL PASSE?, by André Aubry. *Les Editions du Cerf*, Paris, 1968. 192 pp.

VIE LITURGIQUE ET VIE SOCIALE, by A. Hamman. *Desclée*, Paris, 1968, 342 pp.

These three books share the same *raison d'être*, how to put into effect the recommendation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: 'The liturgy . . . through which the work of our redemption is accomplished . . . is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.' Each book goes about the task in an entirely different way.

M. Aubry tackles the task as a committed student of liturgy. He devotes almost two-thirds of his book to a series of reflections on the liturgy as it relates to the mystery of the Church and to man as he is today. Indeed, he really interprets the Constitution on the Liturgy in the light of the two later Constitutions—realizing at the outset that although the Council gave pride of place to the liturgy, the first Constitution suffered by not having the benefits of the development in thought which were brought

to light in the later Constitutions. The third section is more conjectural, and takes up some of the more concrete problems such as the new Canons, liturgical language, and domestic liturgies.

M. Aubry takes a long time to develop his thesis which is, briefly, that liturgy is not meant to be a means by which we perform our religious duties, but it is a recognizable sign, through the sacramental life of the Church, of our participation in the history of salvation. He is at pains to make us eager to renew the celebration of a liturgy which is the work and action of the people of God turning, not towards God, but towards the world. The reflections of this book and its treatment of a few concrete problems are valuable for all, but especially those directly concerned with liturgical advance. As such it deserves to be available in English.

Père Hamman is equally concerned that we