

and yet one finds oneself longing for some hint that the Christian religion is first and foremost about the relationship of persons, God and oneself, oneself and one's fellow human beings. I don't for a moment mean that that we shouldn't think about the faith or that theologians shouldn't discuss and divide ideas, what I mean is that it makes all the difference where you start. If you start from an idea your presentation of the faith will seem abstract, remote from life, whereas if you start from a Person, then in some small way your work will contribute to the purpose of religion, 'that they may know thee, the one, true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent'.

Perhaps it is this insistence upon the idea of the Christian religion which accounts for the strange omission of any mention of the intention of the recipient in the section on the sacraments. That a sacrament is a sign is axiomatic, but the essence of the sign is a human action in which both the minister and the receiver of the sacrament are involved. To disregard this fact is to reduce the sacraments to something approaching magic. Fr Bullough talks about the sacraments in the context of friendship with God which in itself implies such action, since it takes two to make a friendship. None the less the act and intention of the receiver might have been made explicit with advantage. The reader might too easily come away from these chapters with the impression that the reception of the sacraments on our part was something purely passive in the Lutheran sense.

The distinctive and most valuable contribution which the book makes to apologetic literature is to be found in the sections on the reform of the Church, on Christian sanctity—which contain an admirable analysis of effective prayer and of contemplation, both of vital relevance to modern life—and those on the relation of the Church to the literary, scientific and political worlds. These chapters come as a welcome relief after the abstractions of the first three parts of the book, like a fresh wind blowing into a long-unused room. Religion is, after all, concerned with human beings in their relationship to God, and in their personal and social relationships, and there is always the danger for the theologian straying into the paths of speculative theology of forgetting the human equation in what Fr Bullough calls the pure contemplation of truth. It may well prove to be the great work of Vatican Council II to have recalled theology to the contemplation of a person, Jesus Christ, the sole and final source of revelation. When the realization of this seeps down into the Church a great deal of our theology, and especially of our apologetic, will need to be re-written.

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THE QUEST FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, by Gregory Baum; Sheed and Ward, 13s. 6d.

It is now fourteen years since the Holy Office, in its Instruction on the ecumenical movement, crossed the Rubicon and said that 'the ever-increasing desire for unity to be observed amongst separated brethren is the work of the Holy

Spirit'. Since then, and in particular since the accession of Pope John, the Church has been committing herself to the ecumenical dialogue with an acceleration which is almost breathtaking.

And yet, so far as Catholics in this country are concerned, it must be admitted that the ecumenical movement has been slow in getting off the ground. There are, no doubt, excellent reasons for this, which Archbishop Heenan has outlined in his preface to the papers from the Heythrop Conference (*Christian Unity*; Sheed and Ward, 1962). Because we started late, we have to work faster, but the problem very often is to know where to begin. The work would be comparatively easy if 'getting with it' ecumenically were a matter of the head; but it is not, it is a matter of the heart. If it were a matter of the head, one could begin simply by reading John 17, pointing to the wealth of papal statements, and the *tone* of those statements, and laying down the principle that the union of Christians through baptism and faith in the risen Lord is a greater thing than whatever divides us. But because it is a matter of the heart, one can do all these things and evoke only the barest flutter of positive response. All that can be done, therefore, is to go over the ground again and again, calmly, honestly and charitably. A book such as Fr Baum's is an invaluable contribution to this process.

In the first essay, on the unity of the Church, he shows that 'Unity. . . is not a proof, but a message. . . While all Christians seek the unity Christ has promised, the Church does so with divine urgency, conscious that she bears in herself the power to overcome all obstacles to unity' (pp. 23-25). He then traces the development of the papal attitude towards ecumenism since Leo XIII, discusses the lessons to be learnt from schisms in the Church, and points the contrast between apologetics and ecumenism as ways of speaking to Christians outside our communion. So far as England is concerned, probably the most useful chapter in the book is that on 'Ecumenism and Conversion Work', because a suspected opposition between them is at the root of much misgiving about ecumenical activity.

Fr Baum is at his best when writing 'pastorally', when describing attitudes, atmospheres, and methods of approach. He is sometimes less successful when explicitly 'doing theology'. An example of this is the phrase 'what is repeated at Mass is the last supper; the Cross is initerable' (p. 176). But the Cross is initerable *as an historical event*, and, as an historical event, so is the last supper.

There are other examples of a similar theological untidiness, but they do not detract from the real value of this book, which should achieve a great deal in helping Catholics to see the old facts in a new light, so that they acquire a personal sense of the urgency of what Pope John called 'this heart-breaking problem of the disunity of Christ's heritage'.

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