

many and need to be quickly taken up; the educative role and work of the parish, the need for a proper parish library and for evening classes, the extension of theology into new creative centres, a fresh look at the structure and nature of secondary education, a thorough scientific analysis of the nature of religious language, and an intelligent Christian contribution to the development of the cultural debate itself. But perhaps the ecumenical implications of this book are the most far-reaching of all, for while it seriously questions the whole structure and activity of Roman Catholicism in England, it equally shatters the concept of an Established Church. While the Christian Churches in England remain linked with class structures, the realisation of a common culture will never be possible. It is ultimately only through a common culture that Christian unity can happen.

SIMON CLEMENTS

ROMAN CATHOLICISM, by Sebastian Bullough, O.P.; A Penguin Original, 4s. 6d.

Continual practice in the instruction of converts plays an important part in the life of a priest and gives shape and point to his presentation of the faith. It is a useful preparation for writing a book about the Church and her teaching such as Fr Bullough has done, since teaching to be effective must be attuned to the intelligence, the social background and habitual attitudes of mind of the learner. The constant study and reflection which is necessary to do so has the effect of sharpening the skill of the teacher if what he communicates is to have pith and edge. It is not uncommon for priests who spend much time in the instruction of converts to write books which in fact represent their individual manner of communicating the Church's teaching; over the past forty years we have had three outstanding works of this kind from Fr Martindale, from Monsignor Knox, and, more recently, the too-little known work of Fr Ernest Simmons, *Kingdom Come*, a masterpiece of this kind of literature. The odd thing about presentations of the faith intended by their authors to speak to the contemporary world is that they tend to date as nothing else but the daily newspaper does. Now Fr Sebastian Bullough enters the lists, writing for readers from the upper strata of the educated public.

The characteristic of his work which is most immediately obvious is its dependence upon Thomistic philosophy and theology. Is your reviewer the odd man out in finding this rather petrifying? No one can, in these days, call in question the depth and universality of St Thomas' thought or the penetration of his analysis of doctrine, but is one alone in the feeling that the total effect is that of a marvellous and integrated system of ideas which obscures rather than elucidates the revelation upon which it is constructed? It is recorded that Thomas himself at the end of his life set aside the *Summa* with a feeling of dissatisfaction, and I hope that I am not being unjust to Fr Bullough in saying that I began to understand what Thomas felt as I reached the last page of *Roman Catholicism*. The clarity, the succinctness, the depth, the universality of view are all there,

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