

prejudices against her, most unpromising for their conversion'. (*Via Media*. I. xxxvii). Mr. Watkin has pointed out in his *Roman Catholicism in England* what opportunities were missed in Newman's time. Today, in the age of laity, with the new movements and the greater freedom and confidence within the Church, and the friendliness and appreciation shown among those outside it, surely we must take Newman's lessons to heart.

## Less than Catholic

NEIL MIDDLETON

We are known as an organization holding an easily definable body of ideas as indisputable, ideas, which, on the whole, are unacceptable to many intelligent people. We are also seen as something like a series of pressure groups in trade union, political and social spheres; but it is felt that our pressure is just to get something or other stopped. Where people are aware of the existence of educated and intelligent Catholics, their Catholicism is regarded as an aberration that can be discounted. If it is remarked upon at all, it is seen as a matter for surprise that X is a Catholic. This is such a universal state of affairs, that a consideration of why this should be the case is not utterly out of place. One does in fact often come across appeals to make some sort of self-examination, and having done it to go out and become a better Catholic cricketer. What I want to try and show is that the very way we put the matter is an indication that our thinking about the Church is far from what it should be, and I hope that I will be forgiven if my approach should be rather oblique.

A very queer separation is made in some Catholic writing, between love and knowledge. We tend to be rather proud of our simple believer, knowing little or no doctrine, who has a great love of God and says his rosary. We almost feel that to inject a little knowledge would be to spoil an idyllic relationship. The absurdity of our picture is plain when we complete the phrase and see that the knowledge which we failed to inject for fear of destroying that simple faith was know-

ledge of God. We cannot love what we do not know or, to put it another way, the more completely one knows the object of one's love the fuller that love will be. It is, in certain contexts, useful to make a kind of descriptive analysis and distinguish between will and intellect. The mistake lies in then assuming that they operate somehow independently of one another, in separate spheres of our lives. I want to labour this point because it is of the utmost importance. To give a parallel example of what I am trying to say, it would be meaningful for me to talk about form and content in a picture, or about colour consistency, chemical structure of the canvas and of the frame, but no one would suppose that I was giving a full account of the picture. In order to do this I have to employ a different language, one in which it is possible to see the relationship between the sense and reference of the picture (to borrow a phrase from Frege); a language in which the painter's motives, response on the part of the viewer, the subject, style and the world in which it is painted all go to make up the total account. The first language is useful, but it is constructed to describe something less than the picture. I need the second language to describe the picture. Similarly, in talking about will and intellect as separate functions, I am using valid terms but I am talking about something less than a man; to talk about men I have to use a different language.

It is important to use the right language when we are thinking about men, because therein lies the key to our notion of community. The community of the Church is formed in knowing and loving God in commitment to a person, Christ. The Church is Christ revealing himself to us now, so it follows that being a Catholic must involve the knowledge of Christ. The sense in which I use the term 'knowledge' here is highly special; it is the sense which St Paul implies in the second half of *Ephesians*, chapter five. In any close relationship with another person, and I am thinking here of that between a man and his wife, there must always be present the desire to enter into the other person's mind. It is a common experience that this is very difficult and, in some degree, impossible, but this awareness of the other person, which finds its consummation in a relationship of the whole person to the other, physically and mentally, must be the type of our relationship with Christ. It would seem more accurate to say that the relationship with Christ is the type of our relationship with other people, but the nature of things and the order used by St Paul makes it easier for us to think of it the other way round.

The desire to know Christ, to enter into his mind, to give ourselves

over to him, to be united to him physically, that is the desire to love him, and Christ's desire to show himself to us, to give himself to us physically, to open his mind to us, that is to help us love him, must be the centre of our lives, and this relationship is made possible by the fact of the resurrection. It is in the resurrection that the relationship is formed. The Church is Christ revealing himself, but it is Christ risen revealing himself. It is in and through the Son that we come to the Father, but this too is made possible by the resurrection. The exercise of our love and knowledge, that is to say the fulfilment of our function as human beings, is a fulfilment that can only be achieved in the living and risen Christ. It is, or should be, an intensely personal relationship. Personal relationships of this kind have one peculiarity, they can only survive if they are open, that is to say, if the love engendered in them is a universal love, one in which we can in some sense include all men. It is a difficult truth, but a truth all the same, that with the incarnation and resurrection we have, in a very real sense, come to the end of history. We are living in what some theologians have called the eschatological pause, that is to say that the last days are with us but in some sense suspended; the end of the world and our resurrection are complete in the resurrection of Christ. What I mean by the openness of our relationship to Christ is the recognition that it is *our* resurrection and the end of *our* world which is there in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is *our* commitment to Christ and Christ as at the centre of *our* universe. It is in Adam that *we* fell, it is in Christ that *we* are saved. In short the community of Christ is *our* community. We are not saved independently of one another but together. The only thing we can achieve in separation is damnation, and that, of course, is complete isolation. Within the Church the measure of our success as Christians is the extent to which this community is realized. What has to be held in mind is not simply the interaction of love and knowledge but the part that the resurrection plays in our redemption and its centrality for the formation of our community.

It can be seen from what I have just said that our community is Christo-centric, the Church is Christ and that being a Christian involves a constant intellectual struggle, not only to know Christ, but in order to remain within the community at all. Now the Christo-centricity of our community raises the question of the relationship of Christ to the world. It is necessary for us to think clearly about this, because unless we understand this relationship we shall fail to understand the way in which we are to be saved, and ultimately without this

understanding we shall be unable to make Christ present to our fellow men. Indeed to see this relationship rightly is a fundamental part of our own knowledge of Christ.

The universe finds its centre and meaning in Christ. All of history, all of creation is directed and subjected to, and finally transformed by, the incarnation and resurrection. Christ is first. 'He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not made anything that was made', and again: 'I am the first and the last, and the living one'. To quote from an article by Fr Charles Davis in the *Clergy Review* of December 1960, 'We cannot then leave out of account God's work of creation when we are considering the primacy of Christ. Creation does not represent a separate plan of God, different from the one that culminated in Christ. It is rather the basis of the latter. Christ is the purpose which explains creation. Everything in this universe is directed to him and placed under him. The very beginnings of the workings of the material forces were intended to lead to him, and the final state of the universe will be its transformation effected by the power of his Resurrection'. History and the universe in its entirety must be seen as a divine plan, inaccessible to unaided reason because it is an integration of everything at a supernatural level.

Now to see Christ as the totality of our community, to see his death and resurrection as our death and resurrection, to see him at the centre of our universe, is not only to begin to grasp properly what the Church is, but to see why heaven will be this world transformed. It is also to begin to see the way in which we must act in bringing the person of Christ to other people, or, in other words, the way in which we must act in order that God's revelation in Christ may be really effective. It is because Christ is at the centre of the universe, because heaven is to be this world changed, that our salvation is to be worked out in terms of the milieu in which we find ourselves, and that we have a great responsibility for the nature of that milieu. We have to destroy the barriers of our own hostility and prejudice in order to show Christ to the world, but we have too to be aware that in any common good social-political order we shall, in some sense, find Christ. We must bring our understanding of the community of Christ to the community of the world so that the two really are co-existent.

Now I feel in a better case to cope with the question implicit in my opening remarks: 'Why does the Church not affect society?' I have tried to point to the way in which I feel that we must think about the Church if it is to have any meaning at all; I mentioned in passing that

to think along these lines is to be involved in a continual intellectual struggle. I want now, as a contrast to the kind of thinking we ought to be doing, to look briefly at what is actually the case.

For many of us 'Catholic action' is a matter of apologetic and conversion. There is a lack of theological awareness that can lead us to the defence of the indefensible; to suppose that the monolithic structure, absolute, authoritative, and uncompromising, is the true picture of the Church. It is indeed a view which some of us in our weaker moments find comforting, for it enables us to avoid that perpetual intellectual struggle to remain a Catholic, and to answer attacks and questions with a certain facility.

This half-conviction can produce uncomfortable results, which are remarked upon brilliantly by the German theologian Hans Küng in his *Council and Reunion*: 'How often have we in the Church failed to come to meet men where they had the right to expect us, set ourselves at odds where we could cheerfully have co-operated, defended the good with evil weapons and defended the indefensible. How often have we condemned what later—too late—was first conceded, then finally blessed and claimed it as our own'. This kind of withdrawal, defence, and attack is found at many levels. Among the names to be found in a seventeenth century edition of the *Index* is that of Kepler; though so much was wrong with Modernism there were also things which people thought were wrong at the time but which today are recognized as perfectly acceptable; and despite what is said in *Humani Generis* people still attack evolution as necessarily opposed to revelation, to take only three examples that spring to mind.

These examples help to illustrate the point that Dr Küng is making. In the first instance the condemnation of Kepler derived from a failure to grasp the nature of the information being offered. In the second the Church was faced with heresy, and yet it went with genuine theological grievances which were not in fact met at the time. In the third case people are trying to take a bogus short-cut in simply saying that evolution is only a theory and therefore not proved—a failure to grasp the way in which scientists commonly use the noun 'theory'. All this seems to me not unlike a kind of retreat from the world, an attempt to think of the Church as providing an unchangeable set of 'answers', which must not be further questioned. It implies a failure to grasp what the Church is about, and the kind of thing we are invited to share in revelation. This withdrawal into the Catholic 'cage' comes from a theology that is not the living expression of Christ and our relationship

with him but rather a ledger in which we can find all the right answers. This must lead to an impoverishment. It is as though one had formed a deep attachment for somebody and then had consistently misled oneself about the nature of that person; the attachment might remain but it would be accompanied by a continual misunderstanding of what is demanded. This sort of situation leads to frequent defences and attacks which are simply unnecessary if the relationship is based on surer foundations. Where the person one is misleading oneself about is Christ then the situation is little short of disastrous. So often the failure to understand leads not simply to the kind of attack I have outlined above but to attacks on the truth. Examples will immediately spring to the reader's mind.

Again we must consider the half-truths to be found in phrases like 'Of course, there are sinners in the Church, but that is nothing to do with the Church herself', or: 'You must distinguish between the man and the office'. There is truth there, but when these phrases are used smugly they present the un-Catholic notion of the abstract ideal Church, not this concrete real thing which is Christ crucified and risen, Christ manifested and communicating, Christ growing in his community which is real, tangible and living. To quote Dr Küng again: 'If we put together all that we have said and left unsaid about the Church as made of men, and of sinful men, all that has taken place in the profane and sinful history of the Church, the human and all too human, the fatigue and neglect, the mediocre and the vicious, the innocent deviations and guilty destructions; it calls for one thing only, *Metanoia*, conversion of thought and action'.

The abuses inherent in the scheme of things I am trying to portray, the kind of sickness that seems to be very deep, I am certain springs from a partial idea of what the Church is, which can be summed up in the form of the instruction I was given when I became a Catholic. 'The Church was established by Christ for all time and for all men, St Peter was the rock upon which this edifice was built, in St Peter and his successors, the bishops and the priests, lies the power to bind and to loose, to teach and to convert, lies the truth and meaning of salvation'. This, of course, is true, but as a nearly total account it is inadequate. Of course as I have put it the account is over-simplified, but it is a fact that many do fail to get beyond a statement of this kind, and so are kept from the full truth and beauty of God's revelation in Christ.

I think there are probably a number of reasons why this situation should have arisen. It is partly due to the division between love and

knowledge mentioned earlier. But at a more purely theological level I think that the fault can be seen to lie in our failure in the West since the Reformation to grasp the significance of the resurrection and, therefore, the nature of Christ's position in the Church. As I tried to show earlier, it is essential that we get our picture of Christ right if we are to live properly as Christians at all. Not to see the Church first and foremost as Christ revealing God to us now, not to see the nature of the community as totally dependant on the commitment to him is to leave the way open for all sorts of oddities. The curious byways that theology can wander into come, I feel, from a failure to get the priorities right. I think it would be fair to say that there is in this a totally wrong emphasis or a misplaced sense of values. It is a retreat into that world where the Church is the monolith, the mighty system to which all things can be subordinated, there are no questions, or rather all answers to any possible questions are neatly tabulated and it only needs good will to see that they are adequate. In this world it is true we see ourselves as a community, but a community which is, in some sort, an élite; we see it as an open community in the sense that anyone is free to join it, but none the less we see it as a community which is apart from the world; we have the truth and everybody had better see it for their own good. We present the world with this monolithic facade, uncracked and uncrackable, a facade which we see covering a state of things which has blemishes but is basically all right. At another point in his book, Dr Küng asks: 'What can we do?'. How can we show the world that this community is not the machine it so often appears, to show that it is fully human? He says: 'We can suffer from the failure and sins of the here-and-now Church. . . We do not have to put on an act of optimism about the Church, go in for facade apologetics, use the press only for triumphal announcements. We are not obliged to act before the world as though all were well within. We can display our want, our wretchedness, our shame . . . There is a false satisfaction with the Church, a false pride in the Church, a false enthusiasm for the Church, among both clergy and laity . . . This inexcusably superficial and illusory attitude of mind—with its well-known soothing expressions: "It isn't really so bad!" "It's always been like that".! "We simply mustn't exaggerate!" "Pensiamo in secoli!"—can, if widespread, seriously damage hopes for a renewal of the Church'. He quotes Gregory the Great: 'If scandal is taken at the truth it is more tolerable that scandal should arise than that the truth be neglected'.

So we are presented with two pictures of the Church, the one I have just indicated and the other, the community of Christ, the kerygma that is the announcement of the mystery which is made present by the commitment of Christians to Christ. The one demands a commitment to an ideal, un-concrete, and basically inhuman Church. The other demands commitment of the whole man to Christ, a commitment which is physical as well as intellectual, a commitment made possible by the revelation of God in Christ.

If we grasp the true nature of the community of Christ then light is thrown on so many problems for us. The very idea of the development of doctrine falls into place, the communal sacrifice of thanksgiving, the mass, is seen as it should be, both as our sacrifice and the vehicle of revelation and redemption. For the purposes of this paper the central problem is resolved, that of the relation of the community of Christ to the community of the world. The Church does not affect society because we have failed to grasp both the nature of the Church and our role in society.

Heaven is to be this world transformed, and the means of this transformation is the community of Christ, that is Christ himself. Are we here to bring the world into a fold, or is it not rather a matter of extending the fold to include all men? It is in and through the world that our salvation is to be effected, not in some hot-house in which we are to keep separate and uncorrupted by the world. It follows then that it is the world which we must divinise. This transformation or divinisation is not a question of conversion only, though clearly that is central, but of political and social work too. I do not mean that there is a Catholic answer to any given social problem; this is to misunderstand the nature of the community again. But if all of our lives and all of the universe is summed up in Christ in the way I have tried to indicate, then it follows that political decisions and social systems cannot merely be a matter of expediency. At every possible level, they are to a greater or lesser degree a matter of moral decisions. I do not mean that we should immediately have a campaign for Catholic drains, but that what is the case in the politically and socially organized world is something about which we have to make some sort of moral decision. C.N.D., Algeria, Angola, Congo, Suez, Hola, the housing shortage, South Africa, starvation in Kerala, all these are matters which are subject to our Christian ethic and about which we cannot afford to remain neutral. Again it is a question of working as Christians with this heightened grasp of the nature of the Church in the situation which exists. Here, in our work



and in our intellectual development we must, as leaven in the dough, help the world to see that it is God's.

## Sex and the Sacred<sup>1</sup>

HERBERT McCABE, O.P.

In order to talk theologically about sex, we have to look at the place which sex has in the divine plan, in the revelation of God. It might be imagined that we could explain what God has revealed to us about sex, so that we could compare or contrast it with what Freud or D. H. Lawrence or Dr Kinsey has to say about sex. But this would not be quite accurate: what we want to discover is not what God says about sex, but what sex as interpreted by the Old Testament, by Christ and by the sacraments, has to show us about God.

We may begin with a poem which has been inserted at the very beginning of the Bible. Its opening lines give us the theme of the poem 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' It is to be a poem about what creation means. God is represented as working as a good Hebrew should for six days and resting on the seventh. This is not, of course, because the author thought of God as subject to the Hebrew law, for he is the author of that law; but he wanted to make the point that human life when it stays true to itself by following the law of God is a representation of, a showing forth of, God's activity.

'The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.'

As a prologue we are shown the creative Spirit of God, the breath of God which inspired the heroes and great men of Israel, brooding or hovering over the dark waters to make them fertile. Later, after the coming of Light, the waters are to be divided as the waters of the Red Sea were divided at the creation of the Hebrew people. The image is

<sup>1</sup>The substance of the first of three talks on *Christianity and Sex*, given in Cambridge 1961.