

Reviews

THE UNITY OF CHRISTIANS, by Augustin Cardinal Bea, edited by Bernard Leeming, S.J., introduction by Archbishop Gerald P. O'Hara; Geoffrey Chapman; 21s.

This collection of Cardinal Bea's articles, lectures and interviews, covering the period from the institution of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity to the eve of the first session of Vatican II, is obviously of importance. Next after Pope John XXIII and his successor Paul VI, the Cardinal, as President of the Unity Secretariat, speaks more authoritatively than any other single person about unity matters. All the documents gathered here will repay careful examination, not always for what they say explicitly, but even more for implicit conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from what is so said. As the late Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop O'Hara has written in a very understanding Introduction; 'Those who have the cause of Christian Unity at heart know that its interests are served rather by penetrating more deeply into principles than by sensational offers and cut and dried schemes'.

Probably the most significant point constantly emphasised in these collected papers, is the importance of the fact that so many, the great majority, of our separated brethren are baptised Christians. They are in consequence members of the Church though not in the fullest sense. The Cardinal does not often use the actual term *members* of separated Christians, he very often plainly implies it and on occasion he states it explicitly; as for instance in the section headed *The position of separated brethren in the Church of Christ* of the article 'The Catholic attitude towards the Problem.' There is obviously much theological thinking to be done, taking this key principle as a starting point, in drawing out its further implications.

In several places, and especially in commenting on *Mystici Corporis*, Cardinal Bea remarks on the graces of which non-Catholics are deprived, owing to the partial character of this membership of the Church. Clearly they are often deprived of some of the *means* of grace. Do we in fact know to what extent a lack of ordained *means* involves deprivation of the graces those means have been instituted to convey? We do not know, and can only guess, how God deals with good-will and desire in such cases. All we can say is that grace offered by God in response to desire, outside the normal means (valid sacraments), may not be so readily acceptable as that which comes to us by those means. Even so we do not know how God uses invalid sacraments received in good faith.

Theological thinking, it would seem, has considerable work to do in clarifying our assessment of the status of the separated 'Churches' in the work they do in bringing men and women to Christ in the One Church which is his Mystical Body. The separated 'Churches', though institutions of human origin

and authority, in so far as they are *separated* from Catholic unity by human sin on both sides of the separation, nevertheless contain *vestigia* or elements of the Mystical Body, the true Church. These, in some sense at least, would seem to make them, as corporate institutions, *quasi* parts of the Church, in that, as such, they are instrumental in uniting men and women with Christ in his Mystical Body, by means of the *vestigia ecclesiae* they contain.

Cardinal Bea has said some striking words which touch upon this subject by implication, though unfortunately the talk in which he said them does not appear in this volume. They are worth recalling: 'Should we', he asked the bishops and priests at the Heythrop Conference 'leave Protestants to themselves, almost with the hope that they will dissolve and disappear? Such an attitude would be most un-Christian. Far from desiring this, our attitude ought to be one of joyful readiness to help them to make their own religious life effective, and to let them have every possible assistance from our pastoral experience.' (*Christian Unity: A Catholic View*, p. 188.)

There is a great deal that is implicit in this passage which, if made explicit in action, could have far-reaching effects. The separated 'Churches' are under God's providence; the Holy Spirit works in the lives of their members and to that extent influences them as corporate entities. While their members are in good faith and sincerely obeying conscience in belonging to them they have a necessary place in God's plan. These 'Churches' are the only means, because of the considerable *vestigia* of the true Church they contain, by which those members, in their present state of conscience, can become and remain united with Christ in his Mystical Body.

Anyone whose interest in unity work is genuine will do well to study this book with care, and work to draw out its many implications for the ecumenical progress of the future.

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THE CHURCHES AND CHRISTIAN UNITY, edited by R. J. W. Bevan; Oxford University Press; 25s.

Books descriptive of the ecumenical spirit are constantly appearing. This is a good one, and in some ways unlike any similar work of its type, in that it selects a Roman Catholic author for its introductory part. It is edited under Anglican auspices by R. J. W. Bevan, the editor of *Steps to Christian Understanding*, who writes the Preface. It opens with a prayer of the Abbé Couturier. Its Prologue, *World Wide Christianity at the mid-Twentieth Century*, is by Dr K. S. Latourette.

Part I, The Groundwork, is by Father Bernard Leeming, S.J.; as its name implies it deals with the General Problems of Ecumenism. Part II consists of nine essays by distinguished ecumenists on the position and attitude of their own Churches: The Roman Catholic Church by Father Bernard Leeming, S.J.; The Orthodox Church, by Archpriest Vladimir Rodzianko; The Church of