

immensity of the hills; the mountaineer gains health of mind as well as of body.

Something similar takes place in the ascent of the mountain of the Lord. In the valley, there is no general view of the pattern of life, we move from house to house, lane to lane, field to field and fail to grasp their essential relationship. Only from above, only from the heights, does the shape and design of reality begin to reveal itself. If then we come to the mountain which is Christ, we come too to an integrated view of the world below, not only climbing up to the heights of prayer but finding that here is the key position for the seeing and comprehending of all lesser things. From this Rock, the design of life and of history becomes apparent; the objects that appear irrelevant and jumbled to the man in the valley are seen in their correct relationships and proportions. It is in Christ and from Christ that the world takes meaning.



OUR APPROACH' TO OTHER CHRISTIANS

MICHAEL RICHARDS

IT is a truism that a controversialist should know and understand his opponent's point of view; but where relations with non-Catholics are concerned, it may well be that the time of controversy is over and that knowledge of others is now to be regarded rather as essential material for the rebuilding of a native Catholicism than as a weapon for attack and defence. The missionary practice of the Church has always been not to destroy a people's beliefs and practices but to correct, supplement and direct them to their true end; and this applies particularly to work amongst other Christians, where we speak from faith to faith. The non-Catholic Christian already believes in and follows our Lord, although his understanding of him is incomplete; it is our task to remove from his mind those misconceptions which hinder the full realization of the truth, making it possible for him to see the Catholic faith as the complete expression of that which he now holds imperfectly. Applying this principle, we need to participate

as fully as possible in those discussions which are most commonly heard amongst Anglicans and Free Churchmen.

The doctrine of the nature of the Church is probably the one most widely discussed at the present time; the recovery amongst Protestants of the idea that there is a Church and that it should be visibly one, largely due to the development of the new style of biblical theology, manifests itself both in the widespread desire to find, or to create, a 'Great Church' and in a strengthening of denominational loyalties. On the one hand we have the work of the World Council of Churches and, in the universities, of the Student Christian Movement, and, on the other, the rise of university denominational societies and the recent publication of a number of books (of which that of the Archbishop of York is best known) setting forth the 'claims' of the different churches. The three reports on doctrinal differences and the possibility of a future synthesis, produced at the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury by Anglo-Catholic, Anglican Evangelical and Free Church theologians, all show that whatever the desire for unity 'party' convictions are as strong as ever. To those concerned with the problems which the search for unity involves we need continually to point out that Christian divisions have been with us from the beginning, and that there is no reason why there should not today still be heretics and schismatics and, in the midst of them all, one undivided Church. Non-Catholic apologists accept and defend the idea that there was one Chosen People and one Incarnation; why do they refuse to believe in the unity of the People of God under the new covenant? They will point out that the 'scandal of particularity' is to be faced and accepted by the true believer in Christianity, but will not apply it to the Church itself. One can be too anxious to try to believe that all those calling themselves Christians are somehow right; and do not non-Catholics seem ready to believe everything that we do about the Church, except that it really exists?

The drawing together of Protestants in the World Council of Churches is paralleled by their co-operation in university theological faculties, a co-operation which raises the problem of the nature of theology itself. Only at Oxford is the theological faculty still, officially, an Anglican preserve, and, in normal practice, theology has now become a study independent of church allegiance. It is common now for a believer not to learn from his

Church, but to build his 'churchmanship' from his own study of theology. No longer does the non-Catholic theologian write as the representative of a coherent theological tradition to which he is responsible; he works primarily as a historian, constructing his own version of Christian belief from the documents left us by past ages. That version may or may not differ widely from the one commonly held by the group of which he is a member; he is entitled to his own view of Christianity, and it is as a scholar that he must be judged.

Many difficulties arise from theology's new situation. How, for example, are non-Catholic bodies to decide in future what it is they have to teach as Christian doctrine? The idea of an 'official' theology may be fading among theologians, but some semblance of one is needed if the laity are to be instructed. There are, of course, still the Papalists and the High Churchmen who want the Church of England to accept the Catholic tradition and to remain aloof from other denominations, and the Evangelicals, both Anglican and Free Church, who take a fundamentalist view of Scripture and group themselves in such bodies as the World's Evangelical Alliance and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. The latter group will probably soon be of greater importance in the Church of England than it has been for a good many years; but it has been strongly influenced by the contemporary insistence on the church as the *milieu* in which the Christian grows and learns his faith, so that the new Evangelicalism will be something more Catholic than the old. It has been noticeable, for example, that the committee of Billy Graham's 'Greater London Crusade' has been careful to arrange that converts are received into the fellowship of the organized churches.

The majority of Anglican clergy, however, are satisfied with neither of these solutions and are anxious to have a theology which is representative of something wider than a single school of thought. One important attempt to establish a basis for theology while taking note of its changed 'university status' is Canon Alan Richardson's *Christian Apologetics*,¹ in which it is argued that theology is an independent science in which the concept of revelation is applied as a principle of interpretation; the facts of sacred history can only be understood if we assume that they are God's declaration of himself and his purpose to men. This

1 S.C.M. Press, 1947.

presupposition might seem to save theology from degenerating into no more than a branch of research into a distinctive antique culture, as might well happen in the modern university; but even if it were granted that the Old and New Testaments can only properly be examined in this way, the ordinary Christian would still be left with the problem of deciding between the many different interpretations of the events therein described. It may be worth pointing out that revelation must be more than a sort of quarry from which true doctrine is to be extracted; it must be something which, entrusted to the Church, becomes clearer and more explicit as the Church meditates on it and lives by it.

It is with issues such as these, affecting the very basis of Christian belief, that we need to concern ourselves if we are to speak to the mind of those outside the Church. We might well turn also to a study and critique of non-Catholic answers to the problem of the status of Christian philosophy and the relation of reason and faith. Some theologians and philosophers, like Dr E. L. Mascall (*He Who Is*, 1943; *Existence and Analogy*, 1949; *Corpus Christi*, 1953) and Dr Austin Farrer (*The Glass of Vision*, 1948, and his studies in St Mark and the Apocalypse), lean towards the Catholic point of view; others are more influenced by Paul Tillich and the existentialists. Tillich's *The Shaking of the Foundations* was commended as the book of the year by *Theology* in 1949, and since then his *The Protestant Era*, *Systematic Theology* and *Love, Power and Justice* have been published. Dr A. R. Vidler, the editor of *Theology*, has in several places commended doubt almost as if it were a theological virtue. It is also very common for Anglican philosophers to appeal to the conception of philosophy as an activity rather than as a system; they will ask us to share their activity or to use their hypotheses as useful principles of interpretation, but will not attempt the defence of a settled position. In 1948 and 1949 Professor H. A. Hodges gave us an example of this type of approach in his articles in the *Christian Newsletter*, and, in 1950, Richard Hare defended religious belief in a symposium on 'Theology and Falsification' in *University* by showing that, as a 'presupposition', it governs all our conduct. But such a defence demonstrates only the importance, not the truth of religion; when Professor Hodges says that Christian thinking bases itself on the 'Abrahamic presupposition' that man is in the hands of God, the consequences of which it examines and explains, he

seems to be abandoning all claim to belief in God's existence on the ground of the rational analysis of experience and to be making philosophy depend more closely on theology than Catholics would allow. Such an approach may be valuable in apologetics, or in applying our faith to everyday life, but if our philosophy is to supply a satisfactory system of ideas and method of analysis, it must start from observation, not from 'pre-suppositions'.

There are certainly many other lines of approach to the mind of those outside the Church, which have still to be discovered and explored; our missionary work is hampered by our ignorance of contemporary thought within the Anglican and Free Churches. Perhaps we need a periodical which would make it its business to survey the whole field of thought and activity amongst non-Catholic Christians in this country and to make known the Catholic viewpoint on the problems which face those separated from us. It would be a review with a missionary aim, cultivating all those lines of thought which, if pursued, will lead men to the full truth of Christ; and, forcing us to meet every criticism, it would stimulate the development of every potentiality of our own Catholic tradition. Newman's saying might well be a guide for all who would think and write for foreign as well as for home consumption:

No conclusion is trustworthy which has not been tried by us as enemy as well as friend; no traditions have a claim on us which shrink from criticism, and dare not look a rival in the face.¹

He was criticizing the Protestant tradition; but this can be the watchword also for all discussion between Protestant and Catholic which has the resolution of our differences and the building up of a common life in the truth as its aim.