

■ Before a child knows anything he must exist and live ; and then knowledge leads gradually to consciousness, the self becoming aware of itself. And all human culture moves within this same pattern ; it is a progress in consciousness, to an ever clearer and deeper knowledge of man by himself, individually and collectively. And the same is true, the Pope has recently reminded us, of the Church. His first encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam*, turns on this idea of the Church's consciousness of herself, of her own distinctive origin, nature and purpose. It is a call, primarily, to Catholics to reflect on themselves precisely as in the Church – to reflect, that is, on the relation of the Christian society to the Word made flesh from which it historically began and which even now still lives within it as the vital principle and norm of all it does and says and thinks. To be conscious as a Christian is then to reflect on Christ who dwells by faith in the heart, as St Paul says ; and to mature as a Christian is to grow in the consciousness of this indwelling and of all it entails. And so it is with the Church as a whole – with this difference however, that the Church as a whole, as entrusted with the task of manifesting the Word to the whole world, at all times and places, has, we believe, an absolutely inerrant consciousness of the Word who dwells in her and from which she began. She knows him and can infallibly make him known ; she is the authentic medium. But he came in the flesh, and spoke, in the past ; whereas the Church must act and speak *now*. The Church-medium holds, then, between past and present : it is a 'handing on', a 'tradition', to use a term which already in the New Testament (as *paradosis*) had this powerful sense, at least implicitly, referring both to the Word which the apostles knew they had to communicate, and to their own capacity, as guided by the Spirit, to communicate it. In this broad sense tradition is simply the mystery of Christ as present to the mind of his authentic perpetual witness, the Church.

These considerations are relevant to the Vatican Council's debate on divine revelation. In view of this Council's special task, which is the reflection by the Church on herself, revelation is being considered precisely as mediated through the Church ; and therefore it was perhaps inevitable that the topic should have been first presented to the conciliar fathers for discussion in a form reflecting the Church's past conflicts with those who, accepting the Christian revelation, denied the Church's witness to it ; in a form which spoke of the Church having two 'sources' of revelation, not scripture only, which Protestants accepted and accept, but Catholic tradition also. But this way of putting the matter was at once criticized, in the Council itself, as both inopportune and shallow ; inopportune because needlessly provocative to Protestants, shallow because both scripture and tradition (in this limited sense of this term) obviously presupposed Christ himself, as revealing God to mankind through the Church, i.e. through tradition in the broader and deeper sense of the term indicated above. So the 'schema' for discussion was renamed ; not *De Fontibus* but *De Revelatione Divina*. And certainly the

change reflects a more charitable attitude to the separated brethren ; but also – and this is more important – it reflects a deeper, a more mature theology.

■ Current debates among Catholics about birth control and religious freedom bring out the classical theme, stated by St Augustine, emphasized by Abelard, and developed by St Thomas, of the capital importance of intention in deciding the morality of acts. It was this which enabled a living moral theology to maintain itself, or at least to survive, against the inroads of the canonists, who though far from neglecting motives were more concerned with external deeds or works. And this quite rightly in accordance with their system of reference, namely the give and take of justice prescribed by a code of law. The legalisms multiplied and they gathered (though this is only one part of the story) on moral theology like marine growths on a ship too long out of dry dock. Some of the moralists engaged in the overhaul now seem to be trying to scrape away the plates with the barnacles.

The lines of moral theology have been shaped by the long tradition of the teaching Church meditating on God's revelation from a perennial philosophy uncluttered by the details of a human system of law, however august. The patterns were those of inherent rightness traced by natural law, incompletely exhibited by texts wrenched out of Genesis, St Augustine, or St Thomas, and by the two-dimensional details of the manuals on morals. Though it may be noticed that the casuists, who have a bad theological press nowadays, were fighting the cramping effect of laws with weapons provided by the laws themselves, and that those of their critics, who would replace the application of principles by an appreciation of each personal situation, themselves tend to substitute an art of casuistry for a science of morals, and in effect are equally rabbinic and much less modest.

The documentation of the debates on birth-control show two extremes at work, on one side an ultra-realism objectifying it rather flatly as a type of action, on the other a nominalism subjectifying it as a personal expression not to be resolved into any generalization. Certainly modern pressures and techniques have shifted the discussion from the localized concepts that matched a somewhat physiological treatment of sexuality and the mechanical means of limiting its consequences into a wider field of personal and social psychology. Nevertheless human sexuality is not like money which can change its character according to circumstances, so that what the medievals condemned as usury is now required as part of an endowment for a project of ecclesiastical extension, and it is certain that the Church will not deny its past in order to meet the future, or tamper with the links between faithfulness, fertility, and fun.

Moral theology will have to return to its sources and recover its own proper notion of natural and unalterable right, more analogical than can appear in the univocal

statements of a legal code. Moral theologians of course include laypeople, for theirs is the problem, often too tragic for anti-clerical mischief-making to appear anything but impertinent, and theirs is the responsibility for the formation of a truthful conscience. In the meantime as such documentation as that in *The Pill* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 5s) shows, the debate remains untidy, and is not well served by catchpenny captions about the floodgates being open and the foundations awash. And when the editor of this 'documentation of the Catholic debate' speaks of 'the layman's authority to speak' it is to be hoped that he means 'the right to speak' and not 'the authority to teach'.

■ The canonization of the martyrs of Uganda is a reminder of how recent and how heroic is the Christian history of much of Africa. The African bishops at the Council are impressive evidence of a new growth which, as in every age of the Church's life, has only been achieved at the cost of martyrdom. Much has indeed been heard in the conciliar debates of the need to modify the processes by which the Church acknowledges her saints. The baroque splendours of a canonization in St Peter's, as well as the complex legalities that precede the final promulgation, may seem inappropriate to the naming of a saint whose whole sanctity is a mirroring of Christ, a renewed proof that holiness must mark the Church of God. This solemn declaration of African sanctity is more than an ecclesiastical occasion. It defines a new territory of the kingdom of Christ. Perhaps it may herald new ways of proclaiming the holiness of the Church's life, which has a range far larger than that which any process of canonization, however splendid and venerable, can comprise.

■ The muted references, during the recent election campaign in Great Britain, to the social problems created by immigration can no doubt be explained by the reluctance of politicians to expose any part of their programmes to the damaging effect of a moral scrutiny. The Immigration Act, as a measure of control, has its justification, though colour is in effect the condition of control. And as yet the agonies of a mixed racial community have not reached American dimensions. But the need is imperative to reach the roots of a disease that thrives on evasion, on the vague hope that better housing and education will of themselves resolve conflicts that are far deeper than a mere matter of social accommodation. The education that is needed is not only that of coloured children but of the community at large: an education in acceptance that stretches beyond a recognition that public transport and hospital services would cease to exist without Caribbean or Pakistani labour. No amount of legislation can transform social attitudes, and the Christian churches should be foremost in creating the climate of understanding. Especially is this so in the case of immigrants and students from the

West Indies and Africa, who often bring with them a genuine, if uninhibited, religious allegiance which finds little echo in the conventional conformities they find in the dwindling congregations of English churches. The experience of such bodies as the American Catholic inter-racial councils, which themselves have been too often too late in their appearance to affect the radical problem, should be considered. For race is a reality that cannot be ignored, and it is through the honest acceptance of the problems it can create that reconciliation can begin. This is in large measure the primary concern of the natural leaders of the community – white and coloured alike. A universal benevolence can obscure the actual need of local, detailed measures. It would, for instance, be a welcome sign if the many Catholic organizations in such sensitive areas as Birmingham and Paddington were to accept new responsibilities, ones that are commensurate with the true needs of time and place. And these are a microcosm of the Church's mission everywhere. It is little use invoking conciliar debates on freedom and renewal while remaining silent about a growing injustice down the street.

■ The cordial reception that has been given to the first issue of *New Blackfriars* encourages its editor to ask that friends of the review should help to make it better known. A subscription to *New Blackfriars* could be an appropriate gift at Christmas, and, at the request of any reader who cares to take out a subscription on behalf of a friend, a greeting card will be sent to the recipient. In the next issue there will be articles by Paul Foster, O.P. on the African Intellectual, by David Crystal on Liturgical Translation and by Edmund Hill, O.P. on Christianity and Judaism, as well as the customary features. There will be an extended section of reviews of books for Christmas.