

tragic misunderstanding? For example, is our way of speaking in this regard sufficiently justified?

The Catholics of North Europe and North America realize better what is at stake than those of South Europe and South America. They apprehend more clearly also what a fight it will be and what sacrifices will have to be made in order to overcome the division between Christians, which are, both in our own country as in the whole of Europe and the world, such a big stumbling-block to non-Christians in their path to the Redeemer of the world and his Church. 'That they all may be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' The fulfilment of this prayer is put in our hands also, as a heavy responsibility.



UNITY WORK IN ENGLAND

JOHN M. TODD

I HAVE been asked by the Editor of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT to write on achievement and prospects in ecumenical work by Catholics in England, and to relate my article specially to what is being done and what could be done in this respect in our universities. To write upon what has already been achieved in this direction would entail the making of a catalogue of individual lectures and talks, of discussion meetings mostly on a small scale, and perhaps of one or two series of theological conversations held over a period of years between Catholic and Anglican scholars. A few books also, in English, on things ecumenical could be added to this catalogue.¹ There is however no movement in England which puts into practice the principles for which the Roman organization *Unitas*, set up by the Holy See after the war, stands.² There is nothing comparable to the *Una Sancta* movement in Germany,³ or to the 'Istina' centre in France, presided over by Père C. J. Dumont, O.P.⁴

1 A list of them will be found in the 'Comment' on another page of this issue.

2 Its journal in three languages with this title is published quarterly. The English edition is obtainable from Duckett, 140 Strand, W.C.2.

3 Its journal under that name contains interesting inter-confessional articles as between Catholics and Lutherans, published by Kyrios-Verlag, Meitingen-bei-Augsburg.

4 Publishing a quarterly of that name in French and a monthly bulletin of things ecumenical. *Istina*, 25 Boulevard D'Auteuil, Boulogne-sur-Seine (Seine).

It would, then, be impossible to attempt any kind of assessment of what has been achieved, because achievements confined to the work of individuals are apt to die with their authors unless and until they grow into organized movements. At this early stage the ethos or mystique, or merely the intention and motive, of such achievements are embodied in no human society, and there are no disciples organized to carry on the work. To take an example that readily comes to mind, there are today many individuals who are inspired by the life and work of Baron von Hügel, but the approach for which he stood cannot be seen very obviously anywhere in the Catholic Church in this country, because he remained an isolated figure, tolerated but not greatly welcomed by the Church at large; no body of people existed to carry on his work. I am not, of course, suggesting that the ecumenical principles of today are identical with those of von Hügel, but ours, if they are to succeed, must be carried out with his charity on the one hand and, on the other, with something of his courageous intelligence and integrity.

There is then no achievement, by Catholics, as a whole, of ecumenical work in this country, there are only the beginnings of preparation for it; an occasional lecture or conference, a book or a conversation. My article must be concerned with prospects and opportunities. But even here there is a difficulty. One could rough out a blue-print for the making of contacts with various organizations among the non-Catholic bodies. At the university level, for instance, one could point out the numerous opportunities for fruitful contact with the Student Christian Movement. Such a blue-print would be saying what in itself is obvious. If one wants to do any ecumenical work, then one must meet the members of the other Christian bodies, and to do this one must approach one or another organization within those bodies. It is as simple as that, and people actually at the universities will be in a better position to give a detailed account of all the different ways in which such ecumenical work might be attempted, and could draw up a better blue-print than I could.

But such a blue-print, at the present stage, would be of little use because there is still an almost universal ignorance amongst Catholics of the principles to be followed in taking up such ecumenical work. Ultimately this is the major problem facing the Church's apostolate in this country. England calls herself a

Christian country, and her traditions, social, family and political, still possess innumerable ties, still much more than merely formal, with the Christian religion. In many senses, in fact perhaps in most senses, England is still a Christian country. But she is not Catholic. Clearly then we have before us the great task of seeing much more clearly than we commonly do what part of all this tradition is integral to the original Catholic tradition, which we are privileged to preserve, or is a development from it capable of being once more integrated into it. (I speak in this connection not so much of explicit beliefs, but of liturgical and of more generally cultural forms.) It is in following this direction, and, I hold, in this direction only, that we can show our fellow countrymen that the true fulfilment and true exemplar of all their culture lies in the Catholic Church.

I have been asked to write with special reference to the universities; and that is as it should be, for the principles underlying ecumenical work are theological, and they cannot be thrashed out except at a high theological level. Even when we do turn our attention to our separated brethren our approach is too negative, too much time is spent merely in rebutting heresies, and too often, though not so much as formerly, hard words are spoken in controversy, which lack justice and wound rather than heal. But it is useless to pretend that we shall get somewhere simply by cutting these out, from a sense of charity; we must have knowledge as well as love, and the correct approach needs to be substituted for the incorrect. Without a clear idea of ecumenical principles little will be achieved at a level lower than the theological.

How is the Catholic undergraduate to get the knowledge and the training he needs? There must be placed at his disposal a type of teaching and a method of imparting it (both in his last years in the sixth form and during his time at the university) which has power to inspire in him an apostolic approach at an intellectual and spiritual level equivalent to that of his university studies. To be able to communicate such inspiration priests themselves need a special training, which will enable them to integrate their theology with the main currents of humane and scientific studies at university level. Until lately, and to some extent still, the Church in this country was so short of priests that she could not afford to give special training to more than a few. Today,

owing to the great rise in the number of Catholics who go to the university, it is a matter of real urgency that the press of demand at the parochial level should cease to prevent greater numbers of priests proceeding to further studies, not only for domestic purposes but for the benefit of the apostolate to non-Catholics. Such priests would be able to make available to university students and, in preparation for their university course, to senior boys at sixth-form level, a standard of intellectual and spiritual training in their religion equal to the task of penetrating into and supernaturalizing the whole range of their secular studies. It would, however, be entirely necessary that this standard of training in religion should be equal, and preferably superior, to that of the average honours degree. Incidentally such improvement would almost certainly lead to an increase in vocations and would help to break that unhappy tradition by which the great majority of highly intelligent and well-educated aspirants to the priesthood tend to become religious rather than secular priests.

To assist in the attainment of this high level specially trained priests are needed. This has been the message of both the World Congresses of the Lay Apostolate, in 1951 and 1957, and their conclusion has been endorsed by the Holy Father. For forty years and more we have heard of the importance of the laity, but there has been strikingly little response. For instance, even priests who would like the co-operation of the laity in running their parishes find it difficult to get. The reason is simple. The laity have received no training for this work; there is no traditional form, and in consequence they have no knowledge of how to set about things. It may perhaps be suggested therefore, though in this matter a layman cannot fully judge, that perhaps the customary seminary course in its present form is not entirely suited to give the best possible training for a parish priest today, and that some change in it may be desirable. A subject such as the Lay Apostolate is still an 'extra' and is not properly part of the course on 'Pastoral Theology'.⁵ Study of ecumenical subjects is not, as a rule, officially recognized and only results from spare time effort on the

⁵ The author was one of the English delegates to the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in Rome 1957. He was there in charge of a considerable group discussing the training of the laity in the parish. He was surprised to find that in many other countries there are now regular parish meetings, in some places called parish councils. In the Philippines the priest is bound by his Bishop to meet the laity once a month to discuss the affairs of the parish.

part of individuals who happen to become interested. I am not impertinently voicing a private opinion in saying this. Readers whose eyebrows may be raised by it may be referred to Cardinal Suhard, Mgr Suenens and Fr Van Straelen. I am repeating what many priests and bishops have said. That my suggestion may have truth in it is borne out by the extreme step of attempting to found seminaries with radically new principles of organization, as has been done not only in France. I write this in no spirit of carping criticism, but as a layman acutely aware of the opportunities which pass us by day after day because we are not prepared, because we have not listened to the voice of the sovereign Pontiff when he points the way to the solution of all the modern problems; the problems we need to be trained to tackle and not the problems of yesteryear.

Ultimately the principles of ecumenical work are a matter of theology and relations with non-Catholic Christians must in their essence involve our divergences in belief. And it is these about which we are bound to talk at university level. There is of course truth in the assertion that whilst Catholics know what they believe, and have arrived at an understanding of the fullness of revelation sufficient for their salvation, other Christians by contrast are in a state of journeying and seeking. It is true also that Catholics are therefore in a position to teach others. But there is a still deeper truth which puts Catholics beside and not above all others. All men are journeying while on earth; though we are in the Church we have not in fact arrived at our final destiny. Nor is the infallible teaching of the Church the complete and final realization of the fullness of truth. Truth is mediated to us in the mysteries of the faith; it is revealed to us in the Word of God. Theology is the art and the science of understanding this ever more perfectly till the end of time, the art and science of finding an ever more perfect way to describe and communicate the good news of the Gospel. Man must have his mind open to an understanding of the good news, if he is to be able to live it and to find his way. The one attitude he must most certainly abandon is that of supposing that he now possesses all that he needs on earth.

Much of our religious teaching in Catholic schools has a pronounced apologetic aim. The result of this can be, and often is, that the Catholic school-boy sees the main object of intellectual understanding of the faith as its defence, and, as a corollary of this

perhaps, as the means of persuading non-Catholics to embrace it. Such a conception, true in itself but seen in a false perspective as primary, colours and makes inadequate the idea of the Church, which tends to be reduced from Christ's Mystical Body to a divinely founded organization. Much greater emphasis is needed upon doctrine as something each Catholic *needs* for himself, something through which his own life is destined to reach fulfilment. This personal intellectual approach to the faith is greatly needed both in our schools and universities. And it is at this very point that non-Catholics, and even non-Christians, often have something of the true Catholic inheritance, a humble attitude towards the mysteries of life and of faith, a readiness to learn, and a desire to penetrate more deeply into philosophical and theological truth. Too often the Catholic lacks just this attitude, the attitude which should be above all his. It does not occur to him that his education so far has given him no more than a very elementary groundwork from which he may penetrate into the riches of his faith. One reason for this is the absence within our universities in this country of a Catholic Institute or Faculty at university level. Until these exist the Catholic undergraduate will be at a grave disadvantage; and for any kind of ecumenical activity he will have to rely on the chance proximity of an interested priest or the help of his own already busy chaplain. Any substantial achievement will be difficult of attainment.

For training in ecumenical work is something more than studying the Instruction to Local Ordinaries of 1949 or the relevant passages in *Humani Generis*. Papal Instructions are written in the light of *existing activity*; their admonitions and directions are for *movements* which have already engaged in making contacts with other Christians, as for example the work of the groups under the inspiration of the Unitas Association, which might well be the inspiration for the formation of groups in our own universities. The university level at which such groups would work, under the guidance of a trained and experienced priest, would be the level at which serious theological questions are asked and answered. This is the level at which our theology in the past has actually been developed; the expressions we use were hammered out as a result of the thinking and discussion of university graduates or their equivalents. At the university level the problem of how to find opportunities of being ecumenical should hardly

exist. A university exists to discuss ultimate problems; this at least should be its ideal, as it was in the past. The Catholic owes allegiance to a Church which believes in the revelation of Christ, but believes that this revelation has been entrusted to a Church founded by him, which will gradually perceive more and more of its nature and implications and show them to the world. We have no final blue-print; we have only the gift of God which enables us to be wiser and more loving and to become ever more like his Son. We have this gift, a mystery of mysteries, which we can never cease to contemplate and to comprehend more perfectly.

The university exists to encourage such contemplation and comprehension. It is above all the place where the human spirit can open out, using the full powers of the mind and spirit to see more profoundly into the truths entrusted to us. This Catholic attitude breathes the spirit which has been the very life of all Western science, natural and supernatural, a reverent belief that the entire created world has been put into the hands of man, not to do with it what he likes, but to use it as a way to wisdom as he penetrates deeper and deeper into created nature, moulding and shaping natural processes more and more to the benefit of human society. It is precisely the spirit of Catholic freedom, the spirit of being at home in the Father's house. That is our traditional metaphor. It expresses the truth of the freedom with which a Catholic at a university needs to face the questions which seem to be unsolved in theology; it expresses the truth of the freedom with which the natural scientist sits down before a problem; a spirit which is humble and willing to learn.

We are but two days old, if that. There seems no reason why human beings should not continue to live on this earth for hundreds or thousands of times the number of years for which civilization has so far existed. Yet we are sometimes tempted to look back on the human history of the Church as though we have in it a tradition complete and final, something to be treated like a museum piece. But a protective attitude is hardly necessary; the tradition of the Church is a living thing and its own vitality is its protection. The Revelation it contains is complete, given once for all, but its showing forth in the unfolding of tradition is continuous. All we yet have may well be, metaphorically speaking the work of a day or two. Much of our understanding

of it is in the childish stage. We cannot learn to run before we can walk. The Church in its wisdom knows this. Under her direction, for instance, we have gone on repeating phrases in the psalms or other passages in the Scriptures that are intrinsically meaningless. We wait for the elucidation of a better text; meanwhile each may read his personal meaning into the words. This is only one simple illustration of the working of the Church's mind. It is prudent to be conservative. We are but children. But if we are children we must not be over-confident in our powers; we are in God's loving care, the children of our Father. We must come down from our high horse and realize that we have far more to learn, that future generations may well proceed much further than we have gone in their understanding of the Christian dispensation. This is not to say that man will be any more essentially *capax* of God. It is that God will progressively take hold of human tools and human society. Man himself, each man, is, always has been, and always will be, an immortal soul, made to be one with God in his Son. But we are not in fact given this destiny as individual units, we are made to be altogether one body in his Son, one Church, in one society of all human beings. We are made not merely to put up with life on earth, but to redeem it and perfect it.

What has all this to do with the ecumenical scene at the universities? We believe that all men are called to the Church, but we also believe that God's grace is available in some sort to all men of good will. Those not in the Church are not deprived of their natural faculties, nor are they even deprived of that divine assistance which enables man to begin to apprehend himself and the world on the level of grace and faith. What has been here written is a plea to Catholics at the universities to come out of their isolation and be prepared to discuss their problems, all their problems, in the open air with other Christians; to share with them where possible their tradition, their faith and the problems it poses. Fifty years ago there was complete isolation between ourselves and our separated brethren in matters of biblical scholarship. This was greatly to our disadvantage and the impoverishment of our exegesis, as is proved by the change which has since taken place. Today we share, to a much greater extent with other Christian scholars, the common fruits of scriptural research and join together in meetings and conferences organized for this end. What is beginning to be done in the sphere of biblical

scholarship might well be extended to other branches of theological learning.

The most striking action of the Holy See in the sphere of ecumenical relations was a positive action, taken since the war, clearly pointing in a particular direction, an action designed to relieve a particular situation, a friendly gesture. Two German ex-Lutheran pastors, married men, were ordained and permitted to continue their married life whilst working as Catholic priests. They work as ordinary Catholic priests and they are married. The Holy See did not take this action for any special compassionate reasons in regard to these two men. The action was intended as a sign that this was a means of solving a difficulty, of showing Rome's willingness not to remain adamant on matters other than those of faith. The action has the most obvious application to England. It has been said here that the faithful would be scandalized by permissions for ex-Anglican convert clergymen to be ordained, as married Catholic priests. This seems to be a case of attributing to the faithful an opinion on something about which the majority of them had never thought as a practical issue, and about which they would, with due submission, be perfectly prepared to say that their superiors know best. I am being extremely frank. But the laity are frequently asked nowadays to be frank, to voice their opinions.⁶

There is another matter not entirely dissimilar. The reforms of the breviary which are proceeding at Rome seem to suggest that a modified form of daily and Sunday office may be instituted for the use of the parish priest and people in the parish church. The Anglicans already possess such an office, based on the breviary offices; it is widely recognized as an effective means of worship and instruction of great intrinsic beauty. It seems possible that any reform of the breviary which led to the introduction of a parochial office ought to try to take some account of the Anglican office and to approximate to it where feasible. At least the whole subject is one for discussion, and those with an expert knowledge and experience of this particular part of it could make a useful contribution. Such discussion would deal with the place of the psalms in the Christian tradition, and ways and means of ensuring

⁶ The above reference to Pastor Goethe and his fellow-priest is not just my guess-work. An eminent authority in Rome, the reliability of whose word could not be doubted, assured me that what I have said about the purpose of their ordination is true.

that they can be a valid means of prayer and worship for the industrial congregations of today.

The key question in ecumenical discussion is the nature of the Church. The Catholic student who wishes to take part in ecumenical activity will need to be conversant with ecclesiology, and he will have read something of what Catholic theologians have written in relation to the discussions emerging from the work of the World Council of Churches. He will find there Catholic teaching which is traditional and yet in touch with the difficulties of other Christians seeking for unity, but unable to find it. If he can read French he will be able to build up a considerable knowledge of the subject. Even in English there is enough to provide a foundation and framework. If he perseveres he may well succeed in persuading those around him of the necessity for regular work of this sort, sponsored by responsible Catholics and sanctioned and blessed by their bishop. The opportunities are there and waiting, as they are in the whole of our contemporary society, where Catholics are constantly in contact with their separated brethren but lack the knowledge and training to turn their good will into apostolic work.



A PENTECOST SERMON OF ST AUGUSTINE ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Translated by HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In his popular sermons St Augustine (Bishop of Hippo 396-430) never tired of insisting on the unity of the Church. This was particularly necessary in face of the strong Donatist schism which had originated from the supposed invalidity of the consecration of Cecilian, Bishop of Carthage, and had flourished for more than eighty years. This dangerous attack on the validity of the hierarchy and sacraments threatened the very existence of the African Church; the Donatists claimed to be the one true