

cept of grace, which sanctifies and gives man a share in divine life, which appears to be outside the sacramental system. This is often a source of confusion for people trying to understand the goings on in the charismatic movement and I think this book would have been a good place to treat this difficulty.

*Praying* or any other book on prayer is, as Fr Faricy points out, no substitute for

prayer itself, but it should be useful for anybody who wishes to think a little about prayer without wading through the great spiritual classics.

It is a well written book, with lots of suggestions for further reading, though perhaps slightly expensive for a book which will undoubtedly sell well among people active in the renewal movement.

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**THE CHURCH AND UNITY** by B C Butler. *Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1979 pp 271*  
£9.95

English Catholic theologians have produced some very fine scholarly monographs in recent years: Robert Murray's study of early Syriac Christianity comes to mind, together with Nicholas Lash's book on Newman and John McHugh's one on Our Lady. But Bishop Butler stands alone. No one else has been able to combine sound learning with a sense of theological adventure, and communicate his thoughts in so many books and articles. His contribution, while still abbot of Downside, to the work of the Second Vatican Council has been recognized all along. The *Acta*, of which the complete text is now in course of publication, show that he made his first speech on 16 November 1962 in the debate on Scripture and Tradition. In another speech, a few days later, we find him being cut short as he overran his allotted time defending the reputation of the scholars of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the *Revue Biblique*. His detailed comments on the draft of what became the Decree on Ecumenism are entirely consistent with the doctrine of the Church which he expounds in his new book. Ecclesiology is his predilection, and there is certainly no better account than this of the Catholic understanding of the indivisible visible unity of the Church.

In the first five chapters Bishop Butler presents the Church as a visible unity of actual communion. This is what is envisaged in the Epistle to the Ephesians (chapter 1); the notion of 'communion' is the best starting-point (chapter 2); it is originally the communion between the man Jesus and his heavenly Father (chapter 3); the transmission of this communion is cal-

led tradition (chapter 4); the most illuminating locus of this communion is the "informal ecclesiology" in the Farewell Discourse in the Fourth Gospel (chapter 5). Bishop Butler then shows that in the apostolic period (chapter 6) and in the patristic period (chapter 7) it was taken for granted, amid all the dissensions and schisms, that the Church is an indivisible visible unity of communion between all its parts and members. This ecclesiology is still held by the great majority of (nominal) Christians in the world today; it is the churches that accepted the Reformation who introduced the doctrine that the Church is either invisible altogether or anyway visibly divided (chapter 8). This does not mean that the positive Christian values of such churches cannot be recognized and acknowledged by a Church which maintains that among God's gifts in Jesus Christ is the gift of the indivisible visible unity of the communion (chapter 9). To abandon this traditional view would have consequences ultimately fatal to Christianity (chapter 10).

The problem, of course, is the existence of two great communions, the Catholic and the Orthodox, each claiming to be in some sense *the* Church (the Anglican communion makes no such claim). Does this not mean that *the* Church is visibly divided? Louis Bouyer has suggested that the centuries of increasing estrangement have nevertheless not involved official actions that sanctioned formal schism. Instances of full communion are innumerable up to about 1800. Cardinal Humbert, in excommunicating the patriarch of Constantinople in the year 1054, exceeded his

mandate, which had in any case lapsed automatically with the death of the pope who sent him; and the excommunication envisaged only the patriarch (not the Eastern Churches), just as the retaliatory excommunication issued by the patriarch affected only the papal legates, not even the pope himself. But, attractive as he finds this thesis, Bishop Butler goes on to argue that a choice can, and must, be made between the claims of Orthodoxy and Catholicism: "Eastern Orthodoxy, a Church celebrated for its devotion to tradition, has in recent centuries allowed one element of the tradition to drop somewhat into the background" (p. 214). This is the visible focus within the Church as a visible historical entity which is provided by actual communion with the local church of Rome and with its bishop as successor of St Peter (chapter 11). The ultimate criterion of communion within the universal Church was, in the early centuries, communion with the local church of Rome. Making no old-fashioned Catholic-apologetical claims for any handing-on of papal prerogatives by St Peter to Linus, Cletus and the others, Bishop Butler is content to find acknowledgement of Rome as "centre of communion" in some fourth-century witnesses and even in much more contentious third century evidence (Cyprian, Firmilian, Victor).

The essence of the Roman claims, so Bishop Butler concludes, has never been officially repudiated by the Orthodox Church – "though the East steadily resisted Rome's tendency to use the primacy as an excuse for interventions in the East which, to put it mildly, paid scant respect to the principles of subsidiarity and the divine rights of local bishops" (p. 214). But here one begins to wonder whether Rome herself always – or even ever – properly understood her function as the visible centre of the Church as a communion. In his final chapter Bishop Butler shows that, in the first half of the fifth century already, the awareness that Pope Innocent I had of himself as successor of St Peter appears to include the idea that all other bishops derive their episcopal powers from the pope, and that the see of Rome is the source of Catholic orthodoxy. It was not clear, either at Trent or at Vatican I, that

the authority of bishops comes from Christ in the sacrament of Holy Order and not by delegation from the pope. It had to be explicitly ruled out in 1870 that the pope enjoys private communication with heaven. As Bishop Butler says (p. 231): "Nevertheless, it is hardly disputable that Popes have frequently behaved as though bishops were merely their delegates, enjoying only such authority as Rome chose to dispense to them; and as though their doctrine were due to some private relationship with the Holy Spirit rather than to what they could learn from the Church as a whole". The notion that "all canon law stems from the Pope" is "a notion which may need now to be vigorously contested" (p. 233). The notion of primacy "has been pushed to lengths which, it can be argued, have provoked schism and hindered reunion" (p. 233). The whole argument of the book would have gained a great deal if such discreet allusions to misguided papalism had been linked to a thorough-going examination of the way in which the explicitation of the papal office has so often been inseparable from an erosion of both conciliar and episcopal authority. It is not just that the defence of papal claims since the Middle Ages, first against conciliarism and then against episcopalism or Gallicanism, has gravely weakened Catholic understanding of conciliarity or collegiality and of the divine rights of the local bishop. From the earliest perception at Rome of the Petrine function of her bishop there has been a sickening history that greatly weakens Rome's credibility as the visible centre of unity. As Cornelius Ernst once wrote (*Multiple Echo*, p. 173): "From the time of Victor and the paschal controversy to the present day, with very few exceptions, a violent, intolerant dominativeness has been a characteristic mode of papal utterance and behaviour". As Bishop Butler puts it (almost): the pope, in the "great Church" of the future, must learn to be, not "the dictator of a world-wide quasi-political organization", but "the centre of charity" (p. 216). In the meantime, *The Church and Unity* is an important statement of why the papacy is an essential element in the Church, and why it matters so much that it should change.

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