

we may well believe, Yes, but you are not a proper Church. Well, then, what *are* we? If the Spirit of God and the power of God was manifest, thus, and there, what does it imply?

In other words, in the New Testament the idea is basic that the Holy Spirit himself is at work wherever the name of Jesus is proclaimed with authority. And not for our own sakes, but for the sake of that Church unity which is one day to become visible, we must require that *theological categories that are still lacking today be created to express this*. We are in the fortunate position of seeing how these things are done in the Catholic Church: what popular opinion wants today will become a new dogma tomorrow—or so they say. Levity apart, there is more truth in this than one might suppose. I would merely add, there is no point in our meeting and talking like this unless we produce sincere and honest plans for the future, plans that do not make too great demands on the other side. And, Catholic brothers, I do not think these five questions of mine make too great demands on you.



## FIVE ANSWERS FROM THE CATHOLIC SIDE

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OUR non-Catholic friends often ask us questions, in particular about our Catholic attitude to themselves, for most of those who are anxious about Christian unity inevitably feel that their own position in relation to the Catholic Church is a key-issue in the whole matter. In the September number of *Una Sancta* a prominent Lutheran theologian asks his Catholic friends five questions, which to him represent the major problems of a Protestant considering the relation of Catholic and Protestant. The writer is Dr Hans Asmussen of Heidelberg, and his five questions are enquiries about the Catholic attitude towards Protestants on certain issues. The same questions *mutatis mutandis* might be asked by an Anglican or Free Churchman in this country, though every group would present the questions in a different context and perhaps add particular ones of their own.

A number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* devoted to Christian Unity seems a most suitable place for a Catholic's answer to the questions.

The answers must be given in the spirit in which the questions were asked: a spirit at once of frankness and clarity, and at the same time of gentleness and charity. After all, Christian charity will never sacrifice Christian truth, nor will the truth ever override charity. 'There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak': neither is always right; but when the time has come to ask, surely it is also the time to answer.

To begin with, the enquiries may be summarized as follows:

- (1) What of our (non-Catholic) Baptism? Is it valid? If so, why do Catholics ever rebaptize? If not, what is it?
- (2) Have we Protestants an equal right to the title of 'Christian'? If so, are we not already united on the most important issue? If not, what are we?
- (3) Has a Protestant body (in Catholic eyes) the right to be called a Church? If so, what of the Catholic claim to be the one, true Church? If not, where do non-Catholic Christians (if any) belong?
- (4) What of our Communion Service? If it is not a Sacrament (in the Catholic sense), is it merely an empty cult, or what is it?
- (5) What of our Orders? If our ministers are not validly ordained, what are they doing?

And the enquirer ends with a plea that Catholic theology occupy itself with defining the theological function (if any) of non-Catholic worship and ministry. He observes that in Germany there are many hymns, Protestant hymns, that are sung by Catholics and Protestants alike, and sees in this some recognition of Protestant worship. In this country this also happens to a limited extent, and more frequently in the matter of the tunes; and indeed the matter really constitutes another question, which might be summarized as:

- (6) What is the value attached to Protestant worship, seeing that Protestant formulae are sometimes used in Catholic worship?

Probably the most fundamental of all these questions is the second, on the question of the title of 'Christian'. Christians are those who believe in Christ: 'as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name' (John 1, 12). And these sons of God are born 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (v. 13): it is God's work that any of us are Christians. But

to be a Christian means to believe in the Christ who is, by his own revelation; not in a Christ of the believer's own imagining. The Christian believes in Christ as true God and true Man, and as Redeemer of the world. The man who does not believe in the Divinity of Christ is not a Christian. It is one of the oldest heresies to reject belief in the Divinity of Christ: it is the foundation of Arianism. There was a strong Arian movement within the Church of England in the eighteenth century, and one of its leaders was the learned Dr Samuel Clarke (of Caius College, Cambridge). Voltaire met Dr Clarke in 1726, and subsequently in his *Lettres sur les Anglais* (Letter VII) remarked that he would have become Archbishop of Canterbury had not someone told the Queen that 'Clarke was the most learned and honest man in her dominions, but had one defect—he was not a Christian' (D.N.B., X, 446). An Arian is not a Christian, and Voltaire was not slow to see this. And the Arian movement in the Church of England culminated in the secession of the Unitarians in 1773. Unitarians are not Christians, nor are Jehovah's Witnesses, who teach the heresy of 'Adoptionism', a particular variant of Arianism. The point here is that, to be a Christian, it is necessary to be obedient to Christ's own revelation of himself in the teaching of the Church, and that without that obedience the believer runs the risk of ceasing to be a Christian at all. On this basis there may well be Protestants today who cannot properly be called Christians, but no Catholic will deny the title to one who accepts the orthodox meaning of the Apostles' Creed or subscribes to the Nicene Creed, so carefully worded against Arianism ('Deum de Deo, Deum verum de Deo vero', etc.). The Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ is utterly fundamental to true Christian belief.

The reader will notice the emphasis on obedience: it is a notion that will appear all through these answers. The Catholic is necessarily an obedient Christian, obedient to Christ through his revelation in his Church, obedient in his belief, obedient in his practice and worship. Our non-Catholic friends who can qualify as Christians (and this of course fully includes most orthodox Anglicans and Free Churchmen), are indeed children of Christ because they 'believe in his name', and to this extent they are obedient to the teaching of the Church; but in their allegiance they are wayward children. They have left the united family.

It is well known that for Catholics, non-Catholic Christians in one sense are members of the Church, and in another sense they are not members: actually they are not, potentially they are (St Thomas, III, 8, 3); perfectly they are not, imperfectly they are; in fact they are not, in desire they are (Bellarmine); in faith they are, in obedience they are not (Suárez), and so forth; but the point is that all Christians who are truly such have in some sense an obedience to the one, true Catholic Church, even when they are not in a position fully to realize this themselves. Again, everyone knows of the dictum 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus', and in consequence, since all Catholics are much concerned about the salvation of all mankind, they are correspondingly concerned about establishing as far as possible membership of the true Church for all mankind. Yet this can only be achieved through obedience.

Non-Catholic Christians, baptized, and therefore in fact made members of the family of the Church, are like children of Christ who are wayward and have left the family circle. Are they members of the family? In a sense they are: they were born into it, they hold to the chief principle of the family life, belief in the Divinity of Christ, but they live far away from the family, and do not observe its laws and daily routine. It is the Church's continual concern that all should be brought back into the family circle and into full obedience. This is far from a refusal to allow the title of 'Christian', as the enquirer suggested, provided it is warranted by belief and baptism; yet no Catholic is going to rest content with the spectacle of a sheep that is lost—a real sheep indeed, but lost from the fold. We know our Lord's prayer 'that they all may be one' (John 17, 21), and we know that full unity in accordance with his desire will only come when he calls them all to obedience.

This discussion has brought us on to the first question, that about baptism. We are all agreed that our Lord taught that baptism is necessary for salvation: 'unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God' (John 3, 5). Catholics believe in the objective efficacy of the sacraments: that is, the efficacy of baptism in making the child a Christian, a child of God and a member of the Church, while cleansing it from original sin, does not depend for its efficacy on

the faith of the baptizer, nor does it suppose the existence of faith in the infant, who is incapable of it. Luther, who held that justification was by faith alone, was compelled to suppose that faith was 'somehow' infused into the infant, and Zwingli, faced with a similar problem, said that infant baptism could not be effective of the child's salvation, but was merely an edifying ceremony; and the Baptists, again for the same reason, refuse to baptize infants, but reserve baptism for adults who can make a profession of faith. For these Protestant groups the point of salvation is the act of faith, and the rite of baptism is but a profession of faith. From this it is obvious that Protestants, if divided upon the nature of baptism, are likely to be divided regarding its performance.

Once more, we must repeat our *leitmotiv* about obedience. A non-Catholic baptism may, of course, be perfectly legitimately performed, and with the full backing of orthodox theology; but on the other hand there are cases where it is inadequately performed, or at least with doubtful adequacy, especially when the rite is performed with unorthodox theology behind it. In such cases, when a person becomes a Catholic, he is rebaptized conditionally. One cannot allow room for doubt in such a matter. If, however, there is no doubt at all about the validity of the rite, the person is not rebaptized at all, since the Church recognizes a properly performed baptism as valid, even if the notions of the baptizer were somewhat confused, because he would evidently be performing the act in obedience to the Church, even without realizing it. If it is correspondingly certain that the baptism was not conducted according to an obedience, even unwitting, to the rites of the Catholic Church, then the person is baptized unconditionally. In other words, the acceptance or not of non-Catholic baptism depends on the evidence of obedience in the baptizer—a thing often so difficult to establish as to make conditional baptism the usual course, though cases of reception into the Catholic Church without any baptism are by no means unknown. The above regulations were clearly laid down in an instruction in 1878.

In the case of non-Catholic baptisms which are certainly valid, being correctly performed, there is no difficulty. But what of baptisms that are certainly invalid? An edifying ceremony, as for Zwingli? In fact they would be recognized as some pro-

fession of Christianity and probably, in the absence of any other opportunity, count as baptism of desire, making the recipient a member of the Church, not in fact but in desire. And it is well known that St Thomas taught that people having no knowledge of baptism may by God's mercy reach salvation through their good life and implicit turning to God (I-II 89, 6, and *De Veritate* 14, 11, ad 1). And an invalid non-Catholic baptism may be thus interpreted; but at the same time in obedience to our Lord a proper baptism must be administered if there is a chance. Hence the Church cautiously baptizes conditionally whenever there is any doubt at all.

There is only one Church, the one true Catholic Church of Christ. All Christians entitled to the name confess this in the Apostles' Creed. It is impossible to speak of 'the Churches' (except in the early Christian sense of local centres): there shall be 'one flock and one shepherd'. And the one Shepherd claims a single obedience. As we said before, some sheep have strayed, but they belong to the one flock though they have wandered. The enquirer's third question asked whether a Protestant body can by Catholics be considered a Church. No, there can be no other Church, and in so far as its members receive valid baptism, or at least in desire, and profess the orthodox faith in its essential belief in Christ, they are, albeit unwittingly, united to the Catholic Church in faith, though not in obedience.

In fact it may be said that non-Catholic Christians are professing in part the Catholic Faith, and are in possession of part of God's revelation to his Church. The positive elements in Protestant belief are in fact Catholic: justification by faith, for instance, is Catholic doctrine—it is in Romans 5, 1—but the Lutheran rejection of works (James 2, 20) and the objective efficacy of the sacraments is counter to the Catholic Faith. In other words, where the Protestants have rejected Catholic elements, by protesting against them, they have renounced those elements of God's revelation; but where they have preserved essential elements, they are partially in possession of Catholic revelation. Thus though the Catholic Church is the true Church, it does not follow that other groups are false Churches: Catholic Christianity is true Christianity, and it does not follow that Protestant Christianity is false Christianity. On the contrary, it is

true Christianity in so far as it is obedient to true Christianity within the Church. In so far as it is not obedient, it is heretical, for heresy is 'the defect of choosing the things in which assent is given to Christ: the heretic, instead of accepting what Christ gives, chooses what his own convictions lead him to' (cf. St Thomas II-II 11, 1). The Catholic accepts what the Church with Christ's authority teaches him: he is obedient. Recently, in a series of talks to some non-Catholic factory-workers, I was invited to talk on 'Why are Catholics so *automatic*?' A good start, in these days of automation, for a talk on the obedience of the Catholic. And it is the desire of every Catholic to see his non-Catholic friends sharing that unity and obedience, and this is the reason of his objection (mentioned by our enquirer) to Protestant Bibles being distributed in Catholic lands: however accurate or laudable the text may be, the fact that it is an unauthorized text will lead people away from the family circle and away from unity and obedience.

The fourth question concerns the Communion Service. Our own position about the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is plain enough. The objective efficacy of the sacrament effects the transubstantiation, and the Body of Christ is truly present. This was denied by Luther (*Babylonish Captivity*) and then by the Church of England in Art. XXVIII of the 'Articles of Religion', as well as in the rubric at the end of the Communion Service. Art. XXVIII says that the doctrine 'overthroweth the nature of a sacrament' and for the early Reformers the reception or not of the Body of Christ depended on the faith of the recipient.

Now for a Protestant who follows these doctrines of the Reformers and interprets the Anglican articles in this way, there is no question from either Catholic or Protestant standpoint of the Communion Service being a sacrament in the Catholic sense: it is a service of commemoration of the Last Supper and a sharing in that last intimacy of our Lord with his disciples, and is for the Protestant the great means of coming to know and love Christ more intimately.

When a non-Catholic himself believes in the Eucharist in a Catholic sense, the Catholic attitude is bound to be slightly different. Here is an act of worship, not merely of its nature commemorative, but conducted according to what is a Catholic rite.

Yet the Catholic cannot admit the validity of the consecration, since he cannot recognize the ordination of the consecrator as such, the succession having been broken in Tudor times. What will the attitude of the Catholic be when an Anglican kneels in adoration before the reserved sacrament in his church? It is not the true Eucharist he is adoring, but one thing is quite plain: he is adoring our Blessed Lord, and maybe loving him more deeply than many a Catholic kneeling before the certainly valid Sacrament in a Catholic church. The Anglican sacrament is surely an occasion of grace to that soul, even though it is not sacramental grace in the Catholic sense. And after all, he is baptized (presumably validly) and is acting obediently, though his obedience to the full authority of the Church is partial, incomplete and unconscious. The Catholic, on the other hand, has not chosen his obedience: he accepts it totally from the Church.

Thus the Catholic, looking at the non-Catholic Communion Service, is either watching an Anglican before the tabernacle, loving our Lord and receiving grace though not sacramental grace, or is watching the Lutheran symbolizing those last hours of our Saviour, learning of his loving-kindness to love him the more. Far, therefore, in either case from an empty cult, even though in neither case is it the Mass.

The fifth question is about Orders. The question was put by a German Lutheran. Luther denied the Sacrifice of the Mass, and there is no question of a sacrificing priesthood: similarly Article XXXI. There is no question of the clergy being ordained, as a Catholic priest is, 'to offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the dead'. There is no question of validity in a Catholic sense. The Protestant minister is nevertheless a man of God, who has undertaken in God's name to lead men to the love and service of God in this world, to exercise the sacred office of preaching, and to lead his people in prayer. And the Catholic looks upon the Lutheran pastor in this way.

The question of validity of a priesthood in a Catholic sense does of course arise in the case of an Anglican who claims a priesthood in this same Catholic sense—a claim, however, which the Catholic for historical and juridical reasons cannot accept. But the Catholic's line of thought here is parallel to his line of thought about the Eucharist. The priesthood is not valid, nor is the cele-



bration, in the Catholic sacramental sense, but who is going to deny that our Blessed Lord makes use of Anglican rites as occasions of grace for souls in good faith? Many an Anglican has been led by these very paths into the perfect unity within the Catholic Church.

Meanwhile, the Lutheran, the Protestant, the Anglican, with their several interpretations of the meaning of the Communion Service and of the priesthood or ministry, are striving in their own ways to serve God. And in so far as what they are doing is obedient to the Catholic Church, it is true Christian worship: the heresy lies chiefly in what they do not do, or cannot do because of the breach in the past. And once more the Catholic has no greater desire than to see them fully obedient to the Church. What, in passing, of those outside the unity of the Church, who yet have genuine valid orders: the schismatics? Their orders are valid and so are their celebrations; but the orders were conferred illicitly, and the celebrations are in fact disobedient. Once more it is the lack of obedience which divides.

Lastly is the smaller matter of formulae of worship which are shared between Catholics and Protestants. We need not consider Protestant formulae, which together with the Bible and the sacred buildings were taken over from Catholic life at the Reformation. That is plain enough: the Bible and the Catholic rites which remain are the strongest part of non-Catholic Christian worship. But what of formulae borrowed by Catholics from purely Protestant sources, such as some hymns, and a number of tunes? When the new edition of the (Catholic) *Westminster Hymnal* was drawn up in 1940, it was decided not to admit any hymn that was not of Catholic origin. One exception was made for Digby Dolben's hymn, 'Come to me, beloved', since Dolben died on the eve of his intended reception into the Church in 1867. Other hymns, e.g. from the Breviary, have a good Catholic origin in St Ambrose or Venantius Fortunatus, though they have found their most gifted translator in the Anglican divine Dr Neale. Others again were written by men who became Catholics only after they wrote the hymn: such are 'Lead kindly light' of Newman, and 'O God of earth and altar' of Chesterton. And this is as far as the *Westminster Hymnal* goes. With the music they were not so strict. But even if hymns or prayers of purely Pro-

testant origin were to find their way into a Catholic hymn-book, the text (or tune) would have been examined and found fit for an *Imprimatur*, and thus in fact would become a Catholic hymn. The Church from the beginning made use of materials to hand: were not pagan temples consecrated in Rome? How much more the work of other Christians. And from what we have said before, there can be no question of the Catholic despising the worship of his non-Catholic friends. As it stands, it is disobedient worship, and hence to take part in it would be an act of disobedience to the Church and to the Holy See: which is the reason why Catholics do not participate in other denominational or inter-denominational services. But if any item should be absorbed into Catholic worship, admitted by proper authority, it becomes obedient, as is the process in any conversion to the Catholic Church, be it a soul, or a building, or a prayer or only a hymn-tune.

Let us in conclusion summarize the answers:

- (1) Non-Catholic baptism, performed according to the Catholic rite, is accepted as valid; if there is any doubt, conditional baptism is given.
- (2) One who is baptized and believes in Christ as true God and true Man, and as the Redeemer, is certainly to be considered a Christian; one who does not so qualify cannot be so called.
- (3) There is only one Christian Church, and that is the Catholic Church; Christians who stand outside that visible unity are in a sense members of that Church, in so far as they are baptized and to some extent obedient to her teaching.
- (4) The non-Catholic Communion Service, though not the Sacrament, is an intimate act of worship of our Lord, and according to the dispositions and good faith of the worshipper is surely an occasion of grace to the soul, though this is not sacramental grace.
- (5) Non-Catholic ministers, though not ordained priests in the Catholic sense, are nevertheless acting as ministers of God's word, working to bring their people closer to Christ.

While therefore the Catholic is ready to see non-Catholic faith and practice as genuine Christian faith and practice in so far as it is in fact obedient to the Catholic Church, he will yet never lose sight of his ideal, which is the only ideal, of seeing all Christians united in full obedience; and he will not cease to pray

for the realization by God's own power of this hope, and he will continually implore the Blessed Mother (as the Catholics of England do every Sunday) to 'intercede for our separated brethren, that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the chief Shepherd, the vicar of her Son'.



## THE CONVERT'S WORK FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

MICHAEL RICHARDS

**M**ANY of those who come to the Church after some years of the faithful service of God in one of the separated Churches express the hope that they will be able, from their knowledge and experience, to make a particular contribution to the re-union of Christendom. Since they know both the Church and one or other of the separated bodies more or less closely related to it, from the inside, they hope that they will be able to help forward the day of reconciliation between the two. How far are such hopes justified? Many of us know people who have had expectations such as these and who have been disappointed; and there are indeed some converts, well-known in the Church, who do not appear to have been able to work for the return of their former brethren in the way others, perhaps, imagined they would be able to do. Does being a convert necessarily imply usefulness in this field? And can the Church be expected to encourage such converts to work in any particular way, so that their previous experience may not be lost?

The answer to these questions lies partly in the nature of conversion itself, which involves an acknowledgment that the Catholic Church is the Body of Christ, representing him and speaking for him in a way no separated Church can do. This recognition implies a change in one's attitude to the problem of Christian unity, for it means that one has turned away from trying to build a united Church to accepting one that has always existed. Unity in Christ has always been available, but for one reason or another it has not been discovered or has been refused.

An examination of some of the attitudes a man may have taken up on his way to the Church will further reveal the sort of