

PAUL COUTURIER AND UNITY IN CHRIST by Geoffrey Curtis, C.R.; *S.C.M. Press, 36s.*

This book is the first full length study in English of that saintly schoolmaster-priest of Lyons, who more than any other person has taught Christendom to pray for unity. There was already the admirable pamphlet by the Revd A. M. Allchin published by the Faith Press, and another pamphlet translating an essay by Father Maurice Villain, S.M., published by the Holy Cross Convent. The only full length study was Father Villain's *L'Abbé Paul Couturier: Apôtre de l'Unité Chrétienne*, published by Casterman in 1957, followed in 1963 by extensive quotations from Paul Couturier's writings in *Oecuménisme Spirituel*.

Father Curtis's book is naturally indebted to the extensive work of Father Villain for the details of the Abbé's life. But even if an English edition of the two larger books by Father Villain were in existence this one by Father Curtis would still be justified. Here is a sensitive and wide-ranging interpretation through Anglican eyes, and since it was no small part of the Abbé's interest first to discover and then to interpret Anglicanism, this tribute by Father Curtis is most appropriate.

The chapters 14 to 16 dealing in detail with the Abbé's visits to England contain a great deal rightly written in the first person singular, for Father Curtis was the Abbé's guide and interpreter on many of his English journeyings. The note on 'Anglican Papalists' (pages 188 to 194) provides an illuminating commentary on a group of Anglicans widely misunderstood both inside and outside their own church.

The essence of the Abbé's re-creation of the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity is summarized in five points (see page 76 ff):

1 A *confiteor* sustained by all in humility, prayer and penitence which are independent but con-

vergent.

2 The necessarily ecumenical aim of this convergence. It is unity with all in Christ that each group is seeking.

3 The scrupulous conservation of the radical independence of the theological traditions concerned, despite this common ecumenicity.

This may be called the 'Triangle of the Octave' which has for its goal a general reunion about which we know nothing else except that God desires it since Christ has prayed for Unity.

To these basic ideas, two others are to be added:

4 The awareness that prayer for Unity is a participation in the high priestly prayer of the Ascended Christ himself.

5 The potential universal brotherhood that is ours in Christ is rooted in our common acceptance of baptism.

It was the weaving together of these five strands which enabled a whole range of Christians to enter in to that deep spiritual fellowship of common prayer which the Abbé used to call 'The Invisible Monastery'. The continued and growing existence of that invisible fellowship is his true memorial, but in God's providence what began as such a hidden work becomes daily more manifest.

The development of the observance of the Week of Prayer within all non-Catholic circles influenced by the World Council of Churches is sketched in the later chapters of Father Curtis's book, where he describes the years during which I came to know the Abbé personally during my period of service as Secretary of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council. Today the leaflet jointly put out in Geneva and in Lyons is used in hundreds of thousands of churches all

over Britain and Europe and increasingly in North America.

Many men and women have in consequence come to make their own the *Testament* of Cardinal Mercier which Couturier was so fond of quoting :

'In order to unite with one another, we must love one another; in order to love one another, we must know one another; in order to know one another, we must go and meet one another.'

✠ *Oliver Bristol*

LES RELIGIEUSES DANS L'ÉGLISE ET DANS LE MONDE ACTUEL. Par Sœur Jeanne d'Arc, O.P.; Paris : Editions du Cerf.

With the winds of *aggiornamento* blowing steadily in the Church, it is not surprising that among women's religious orders there is a keen scent of renewal in the air. In fact, renewal in various forms had already been widely felt before Pope John even mentioned the summoning of a Council, now nearly six years ago, nor should the present movement towards modernization be unduly attributed to the influence of Cardinal Suenens' much-publicized *The Nun in the World*. Undoubtedly, before his book appeared, there were already stirrings towards reform, fostered by the growth of contacts and groupings of religious of different types – the Council of Major Religious Superiors, and the Association of Convent Schools, to mention only two among many. The good achieved by these contacts and countless others at courses, summer-schools, conferences and lectures shared by nuns of many Orders has been incalculable in breaking down barriers, building up a strong spirit of co-operation and fraternal charity, widening horizons and throwing open windows generally.

Other influences have filtered through from the continent where many Orders have connections of some kind, and there it is hard to overestimate the value of a series of publications on *Problems of Religious Life*, brought out by Les Editions du Cerf over the last ten years or so. One of the latest of these, *Les Religieuses dans l'Eglise et dans le Monde actuel*, by Sœur Jeanne d'Arc, O.P., is a contribution of major importance. The writer has the great advantage of knowing the situation from the inside and reveals herself as a woman of profound insight who tackles her subject with admirable understanding, courage and balance of view.

After an outline, clear and to the point, of the principles underlying the religious life, she gives a penetrating analysis of the present situation and discusses a variety of problems, especially those in which Orders founded to deal with past emergencies now find themselves. The picture is frank and undisguised, so refreshingly candid yet sensible and serenely supernatural that it manages to avoid that critical tone of disparagement sometimes met with in others who approach this subject with less experience and depth of vision. The problems dealt with in this section are basic general ones concerning the religious life itself and the place of religious Orders in the Church and the world of today; the author is not here directly concerned with the individual and her personal or psychological adaptation. Inevitably, it is above all the situation in France that she puts before us. Both historical background and present position as well as the problems to be faced are somewhat different in England and the United States. Convents in England are fewer and on the whole better distributed than they are in France.

Nevertheless, if all this part makes most absorbing reading whether applicable to the English scene or not, it is in the third and largest section that Sœur Jeanne d'Arc really gets into her stride. Instead of dwelling disproportionately on difficulties, inadequacies and a diagnosis of the case, she devotes very nearly two-thirds of her book to constructive suggestions carefully and thoroughly worked out on all levels. Her first concern is to develop the individual religious in every way, and great emphasis is laid on doctrinal formation. In this respect religious today, we are told in a footnote on p. 217, are in a position similar to that of