

OBITER

THE CHURCH UNITY OCTAVE was celebrated last January with some unusual and heartrending misunderstandings. In view of the dismay expressed by the *Church Times* (20 January) at Dom Aelred (Graham's having been prevented from attending the annual meeting at Caxton Hall, it is worth quoting part of that journal's review of 'Catholicism Today'—the booklet of *The Times's* correspondence on that subject:

Cannot the 'Mother and Mistress of all the Churches' claim and prove her title in this hour of desperate need and common Christian peril? Is there no way by which she can steal the thunder of the World Council of Churches with a deeper truth and far greater impressiveness? Cannot she draw her 'separated children' at least round her and closer to her in an atmosphere, not of argument and denunciation, but of love and the enormous emotional appeal that her grandeur produces? We need, no doubt, personal contacts, friendships, informal discussions at ordinary levels. . . . But that is not enough.

In the same issue (6 January) the *Church Times*, which like nearly every convinced Christian today recognises the danger of any attempt at compromise or shelving the divergences in doctrine between the Churches, lays down eight principles of conformity to primitive tradition which it believes to be necessary tests of orthodoxy for working towards union. These concern the Creed (the Apostles' and the Nicene), the true interpretation of the Scriptures, the Sacraments (without specifying any exact number), the 'character' given by certain sacraments which include matrimony, the power of ordination giving a character and a *potestas*, the necessity of the episcopacy, the power of absolution, and the discipline. All of these points are important to the means of Church life, but they do not reach to the roots of the nature of the Church. Surely this foundation of all Church unity is the one doctrine which 'the Mother and Mistress of all the Churches' supplies most clearly and upon which alone she can establish the powerful leadership which more and more Christians are expecting of her.

The eight lectures delivered during the Unity Octave at Blackfriars, Oxford, are to form the next number (a double number) of BLACKFRIARS. They showed that the Catholic Church has something of vital importance to offer to all outside her fold, be they Jews, Methodists or Marxists. The Unity which flows from the centre of Catholicism is very clearly revealed in these papers, which will therefore be of value in any discussion of Christian unity.

THE CATHOLIC DIRECTORY from which a great many of the facts regarding the Catholic Church must have been drawn for the original article in *The Times*, arrived promptly at the beginning of January (Burns Oates, 10s.6d.). It is invaluable for the immense amount of information it contains in its 800 pages. For this the Holy Year it came accompanied by *The Catholic Almanac and Year Book* (Burns Oates, 3s.6d.) which is intended to supplement the Directory for international information. It contains a useful history of the Pontificate by quotation from the Holy Father's own encyclicals and pronouncements, and together with the general statistics of the Church in the World it gives a conspectus of the position of the Church in the Holy Land, Eastern Europe and China as the three parts of the world which give most concern to Catholics today. For confirmation of the claim in the original article in *The Times* that the Catholic Church *de facto* is the largest and most important body of Christians in the world today and the one which is putting up the only effective resistance to Communism, this *Almanac* with its statements on these three regions is of great service.

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'CATHOLIC DOCUMENTS' (published by The Pontifical Court Club; 2s.6d. an issue) is in the matter of Catholic information a most welcome and most important newcomer among English Catholic periodicals. His Grace the Apostolic Delegate, president of the Court Club, states the purpose of this 'Documentation' in the foreword.

There are many Papal pronouncements, apart from Encyclical letters, which may not receive the attention they deserve, because they are not made easily available. So it will be useful to have published occasionally a volume in which are gathered together chosen addresses of the Pope.

And the selection begins with a homely talk by the Pope in 1947 to Italian bee-keepers, in which he draws a parallel between the orderly society of the bee and our own. It includes the Christmas allocution of 1948 on the marks of the true Christian will for peace and the anguished words to the College of Cardinals on the attack on Cardinal Mindszenty and it concludes with the promulgation of the Holy Year. Unlike many 'documentations' it is very well produced, and it will not appear regularly but only when occasion demands.

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If there is one issue more than any other which most nations treat as a touchstone for the sincerity of Germany's rejection of Nazism it is the question of anti-Semitism. Not many Germans appear to

be aware of this, so it is all the more encouraging to read the excellent review *Rundbrief* which is specially concerned to promote friendship between Jews and Catholics. As well as calling attention to fresh signs of anti-Semitism in Germany the December number contains an illuminating exchange of letters between Karl Thieme and Martin Buber on the question of the conversion of Israel. Anyone specially interested in the conversion of Israel will find it worthwhile to read *Rundbrief*, which is published from Freiburg-i.-Br., Werthmannplatz 4.

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AN APPEAL on behalf of Christian unity written to the Pope from a prison cell is printed in *Fiches Documentaires* (15 January 1950). It was written by Mgr Metzger, imprisoned by the Nazis in 1939 and eventually executed in 1944. He had been present as the Catholic observer at the Faith and Order conference held at Lausanne in 1927 and he had founded the 'Una Sancta' movement which included a great many Catholics and Protestants in an effort towards union among Christians. He writes with great urgency born of his wide experience, declaring that the main barrier to unity from the Catholic side is the air of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. If the non-Catholics, he wrote, could be shown that those who governed the Church were ready to try every means, and that they would find in us a true humility and love and a readiness to recognise the Holy Spirit even when he spoke through a brother in Christ not of the same faith (John 3, 8), then they would come close to the Church. He suggests to the Holy Father that he choose twelve wise, theologically profound and spiritual men, having His Holiness's entire confidence, to meet representatives of other Christian communions who would all gather at, say, Assisi, the home of the Poverello, to begin confidential conversations. The results of these talks were to be communicated to His Holiness and studied by a Pontifical Commission specially constituted for the purpose—and all this to be the preliminaries to a General Council dealing specifically with the new vision of a united Christian Church. Those were critical days with the world war just begun; but the present day is even more critical, so the appeal is worth reflection.

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RUSSIA and the Church provides a subject for constant speculation and only dim hope. The official religion is now the scientific atheism of Communism which makes any approach from the Church almost impossible. Père de Regis, S.J., begins an article on the subject (in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, January) by pointing to the distinction between diplomatic and apostolic communications:

The history of the relations between the Holy See and Russia no longer continues. Quite rich in diplomatic matters, it is unhappily exceptionally poor in apostolic activity, in important contacts and in the simple cultural and human relations.

Nevertheless the latest issue of *Russie et Chrétienté* (4th Series, Nos. 3-4, 1949) offers greater hope at least in that it provides its readers with a great deal of useful information on these particular matters. Dr Dvornik, who has done more than anyone to continue and deepen the relationship between Eastern Orthodoxy and the Catholic Church, writes of the effect of Byzantium upon the Slavs and the Franks. His interesting remarks on the work of the Greek missionaries in Moravia are supported by way of extension by B. Nikitine's description of the apostolate among the peoples of Silesia as Russia gradually extended her influence across that vast tract of land. The number also includes the statistics of the Orthodox Church in U.S.S.R.—it is in fact a very important issue of an important periodical.

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ANOTHER FATAL CASUALTY in the realms of Catholic journalism is disclosed in the death of *Context*, the first British Catholic Digest. It is difficult to regret the disappearance of a 'digest' but it is a misfortune that it should be ousted by an American streamlined affair and by the continual rise in the cost of production in the press. It would be profitable to humanity if fewer words were printed, but surely it is a disaster that the demise of the small journals is merely leaving the field entirely in the hands of 'big business' in the realms of journalism.

A NEWCOMER is *The Frontier* (Blackwell; 20s. per annum), a monthly review combining the talents of *The New English Weekly* and *The Christian Newsletter*, both deceased. It describes itself as 'A Christian Commentary on the Common Life'—and to it we extend a very warm welcome.

The Somerset and Taunton Standard begins a new drive and is almost a new periodical (3d.; 16 Trinity St., Taunton). It needs subscribers, and deserves them as it is one of those small ventures which aim at bringing a sane and Christian outlook to Catholics and non-Catholics alike in a particular part of the world, though it also has a wider appeal.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION in relation to the teaching of the Holy See is treated by Père Renwart, S.J., in *Nouvelle Rev. Theol.* (December). And 'Narco-analysis' is the object of enquiry in *La Vie Intellectuelle* (January).