

ation, helps to explain the distinction between grace under the old and grace under the new dispensation. This is the method of the Fathers rather than the scholastics, to explore the interactions of the different elements of the divine economy and revelation, a method in which analogy rather than deduction is the chief instrument. Occasionally Père Bouyer takes it too far, so that one feels that he is straining towards statements that are fanciful or even dubious in the light of the New Testament. Thus for example in discussing the compassion of our Lady, after emphasizing with strong sense that the question is less whether her motherhood was a contributory cause of the redemption than how the redemption is fulfilled in us by the extension of her motherhood, he is led in the course of the next two pages to say that our Lady's intercessory power is founded on the fact that she saw into the full meaning of the passion at the time it took place and applied the work of her son in it to us all. This is far-fetched; nothing in the incident at the foot of the cross indicates that at that moment our Lady herself realized that in accepting John as her son she was accepting all the members of Christ into her motherhood. The indications, one would have thought, went the other way. In arranging for the future care of his mother and his disciple our Lord was giving a sign whose intention he himself certainly meant in the fullest theological sense but which the disciple only penetrated later. Did our Lady there and then understand its full meaning? Since Père Bouyer comes down in favour of the view not that our Lady could doubt but that she could suffer a tension in her mind between her faith and the apparent failure of her son's work, it seems odd that at this point he should decide so strongly for such a perfection of understanding. If, as tradition seems to affirm, our Lord himself suffered an agony of dereliction, then analogically one might expect our Lady's tension of faith also to be at its height, itself an element in her suffering and compassion. There are a few passages such as this where the method seems to lead to theological conceits, but these are outweighed by many insights and fruitful conjunctions. The translation seems a little hurried, lapsing sometimes into theological jargon, and the proof-readers have left too many misprints.

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THE WORD, CHURCH AND SACRAMENTS IN PROTESTANTISM AND CATHOLICISM, by Louis Bouyer, Cong. Orat.; Geoffrey Chapman, 10s. 6d.

If you start with a 'Catholic' principle of subordinating the authority of the scriptures to that of the Church, in confrontation with a Protestant principle of subordinating the Church to the scriptures, you can never arrive anywhere merely by recommending Bible reading to Catholics or clarifying this or that New Testament emphasis on the Church for Protestants. The underlying assumption once made that there are two rival authorities, with the consequent necessity of subordinating one to the other, nothing can come out right.

What Fr Bouyer has done is to step completely clear of that impasse. His three sections on the scriptures, the authority of the Church, and the sacraments, each in Protestantism and in Catholicism, eventually show these three as one; for they are all the Word of God.

Protestantism has discovered experimentally that the word of God remains itself only when proclaimed and received in a community living by the Spirit: there must be a living traditional transmission or nothing is left but a divisive dead letter, subject to corrosion by fashions in scholarship. In Catholicism, on the other hand, both the real meaning of the Church's authority and the full richness of the word are lost if it is forgotten that 'the sole sovereign authority for the Catholic Church in questions of doctrine is the word of God'; that 'this word is preserved in Scripture in an entirely unique manner'; and that 'tradition is not something other than Holy Scripture and added to it, but rather the entire living transmission of the truth, whose central organ is the inspired Scripture'.

Again, the idea of sacrament as *verbum visibile*, traditionally 'Protestant', should have meant, in line with the best of Protestant insights concerning the word, the Catholic doctrine that a sacrament is 'a mysterious event in which the word touches us directly, not only to enlighten us but to act within us, to change our whole life by bringing to it the life of Christ himself'. A far cry from sacraments as mere 'visual aids', poor second-bests to reading and preaching. On the other hand, the Catholic doctrine of sacramental efficacy *ex opere operato* should mean the fullest possible assent to the 'Protestant' emphasis on grace as gratuitous; not a magical manipulation of divine power.

We Catholics can know the sacraments as the real presence of Christ only if we recover the full and scriptural sense of the word. Protestants can preserve the word as the word of God only if they recover the full sense of the Church. Neither of us can understand what we mean by the Church unless we become aware of the reality of the word in both scripture and sacrament: unless 'it is fully understood that the word of God cannot consist merely in something written, but is primarily a living word. It is a living word of which it is not enough to say that it is entrusted to the Church; its presence, ever active through the ages, being the presence of Christ himself, is what constitutes the Church . . . In those he has sent, it is always he who is present, who speaks and acts, so as to keep always present, ever active, his mystery, the mystery of his cross and resurrection, the mystery of the Church and of his gift to it and for it, the mystery which is, so to speak, the final word the Word of God had to speak to us'.

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