

ECUMENICAL SURVEY

THE preparatory work for the coming Vatican Council is slowly taking shape, though the detailed subject-matter for discussion by its ten Commissions has not as yet been made public. These Commissions together with two Secretariates were constituted by a *Motu Proprio*, in the form of an Allocution, delivered by the Pope in St Peter's on the eve of Pentecost last June. Of the deepest interest to those concerned with the union of all Christians is the Secretariate of Unity, presided over by Cardinal Augustine Bea, S.J., a well-known biblical scholar; its secretary is Mgr J. G. Willebrands, representative for ecumenical work of the Dutch hierarchy and well known in non-Catholic ecumenical circles. This Secretariate is designed to enable Christians separated from the Holy See to follow and understand the work of the Council. The Pope has said of this particular Secretariate that it is 'a token of his affection and good will towards those who bear the name of Christian, but are separated from the Apostolic See'.

Good will and affection, and the desire for understanding; that has been the key note of the Holy Father's utterances in regard to dissident Christians from the day he announced the convocation of a general council at the beginning of his pontificate. He has said that the main work of the Council is that the Catholic Church may set its own house in order in various ways, and in particular by an increase of charity towards our separated brethren, the charity of knowledge and understanding, which will show them the unity of the Church for what it is. The Pope has deprecated the meeting of Catholics and non-Catholics in big assemblies for the discussion of differences of doctrine—the time for that is not yet—and has emphasized the necessity of personal contact and understanding on the level of the truths of the Christian faith, as a pre-requisite of unity.

The precise aim of the work of the Secretariate for Unity is in accord with the spirit of the Holy Father's words. This is borne out by some words of Cardinal Bea, its President, spoken at a press conference in Fordham University in the U.S.A. He said that part of the task of the Secretariate would be to present to the Second Vatican Council an exposition of the views of non-Catholic Christians, and to help them to follow the course of the Council's work, particularly with regard to Christian unity. 'Research and points held in common', the Cardinal concluded, 'should become points of contact, and precisely these contacts will be sought for by the new Secretariate' (*Unitas*, Summer 1960, p. 146).

In this spirit the Secretariate for Unity has already begun its work. The Commission of *Faith and Order* of the World Council of Churches held its annual Session from August 3rd to the 8th at St Andrews, one of the principal subjects of its discussion being Christian unity. An invitation was sent, at the suggestion of Mgr Willebrands, by Mr Keith R. Bridston, the Commission's secretary, to three priests expert in ecumenical matters asking them to attend the meetings of the Commission as observers. The priests are Père Jerome Hamer, O.P., Regent of Studies in the Province of Paris,

Père René Beaupère, O.P., Head of the Centre de S. Irenée at Lyons, and Father Bernard Lccming, S.J., of Heythrop, whose book on the Ecumenical Movement has recently been published. The invitation was accepted with the concurrence of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office and the three observers will report back to the Secretariate for Unity in due course. This no doubt is an early beginning of much similar contact.

The next meeting of the Catholic Conference on Ecumenical Questions, of which Mgr Willebrands is the secretary, will be held this year from September 9th to 23rd at the Villa Caglione at Gazzada near Milan. The general theme of this conference will be 'The problem of Christian Unity in relation to differences that are legitimate and compatible with unity'. If the problem of unity is placed, as it should and must be by Catholics, in the context of a reunion in the *One* Church, as our Lord desired and established it, the Church, in order to be in the fullest sense possible the gathering of the people of God, must clearly reunite and include in her unity all authentic and legitimate traditions which have developed during the ages. Going to the sources of her own fulness she must, at the same time, accept and blend those forms of thought and life which, while remaining faithful to revealed truth, have taken a shape of their own in the separated communions, and have preserved and promoted some particular stress that can enrich the manifestation of the mystery of Christ. Under the aspect of their compatibility with unity the different forms of thought and life that exist in the separated bodies, as genuine *elementa ecclesiae*, will be studied and discussed at this Conference by Catholic theologians and experts from various parts of Europe, including representatives from our own country.

That many Protestants and other non-Catholic Christians appreciate deeply the concern of Pope John XXIII for unity among Christians is movingly expressed in the personal letter to the Holy Father written by the Rev. J. Robert Nelson, Dean and Professor of Theology, one of the well-known figures of the World Council of Churches. We cannot do better than end this survey by quoting a portion of it:

'By God's grace, Your Holiness has been called to the See of Rome at a time when Christians of every communion are notably sensitive to division and ardently desirous of unity. And your own actions and pronouncements have raised the hopes of many who long for the healing of the wounds in the Body of Christ. A spirit of true Christian charity is expressed in your recent Encyclical *Ad Petri Cathedram* when the words of the venerable St Augustine are quoted: "they will cease to be our brethren only when they shall cease to say the Our Father". Many of us who worship in Churches not in communion with the Holy See apply these words reciprocally to Roman Catholic Christians. But brotherhood in Christ remains a fractured fraternity because of ecclesiastical schism.

'It is clear to us that the Roman Catholic Church asserts unequivocally that the fulness of unity can be attained only by conversion to herself. It is equally clear that many of us, who may be willing to consider certain modifications of our faith if required for the sake of the

truth of the Gospel, cannot conceivably accept the gracious invitation extended in the Encyclical. Yet we believe that love and truth and unity belong together as one perfect expression of the Divine will, no one of which may be opposed to the other. Love does not need to wait until truth is wholly agreed upon and unity made manifest. As my personal friend, a Jesuit theologian, has said: "Sympathy without knowledge is futile; knowledge without sympathy is sterile". Or as the great Apostle St Paul wrote: "Love bears all things, believes all things"—even such things as our lack of understanding and our deep divisions over worship and dogma. So as Christians, whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant, our first duty towards one another is to express the love of Christ which constrains us. And our second duty is to gain knowledge of one another in such common meeting, dialogue and worship as our faith and conscience allow. . . .

'As preparations continue for the coming General Council we shall watch and study with keen interest. We hope, too, that the circle of Roman Catholics who take friendly interest in the Ecumenical Movement will continue to expand with the encouragement of Your Holiness.' (*Unitas*, Summer 1960, pp. 143-4.)

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HEARD AND SEEN

Festivals

THEY have become an essential feature in the summer landscape of Europe—from Aix to Elsinore, from York to Cork: the programmes promise fresh wonders, and the cultural caravanserai grows larger every year. Perhaps the larger the lesser, if the terms are those of serious achievement. The festival which springs from the genius of a place, where artists work and, once a year, give public voice and vision to their own achievement, can hardly fail to please. Thus Prades or Aldeburgh can claim an authentic purpose which the stream-lined publicity of Edinburgh certainly fails to justify. The big battalions of opera and international orchestra command the crowds and the large-scale cash, but it needs more than a reiterated dialect play in a converted Assembly Hall (or Gaelic ballads in a church hall after hours) to make the Edinburgh Festival an organic thing: its affinities, in artistic terms, are those of the international airport and the Westbury Hotel. Once the decorations are down and the troops of the tattoo have gone back to Knightsbridge, art can depart as well: its season is over with the end of summer.

It is a mark of the cultural wilderness in which we live that we should be sustained by such oases. The milling multitudes who have been invading the Tate this summer to see the stupendous Picasso show have been led there by who knows what motives of curiosity or of keeping up with the telly-alerted Joneses. Has one in a thousand of them ever been to Dulwich