

regrettable is that it offers an unworthy picture of the priesthood. Prayer in any substantial degree is brushed aside as 'monastic' and therefore unsuitable for secular priests. There is a faulty attitude towards disappointment and suffering, no reminder that a priest is *alter Christus* not only in what he does but in what he suffers. Obstacles to the thorough performance of priestly work should be removed so far as possible; but some will always remain, and a priest should recognize crosses when he sees them, and accept them as did the apostles and the apostles' Master. Probably these writers do so, but are too modest to admit it. Their modesty is misplaced.

As the priest's life is ill portrayed, so also his work. *Ars artium est regimen animarum*, and it calls for careful preparation. Yet here we have priests who, fresh from a seminary training which they describe as woefully inadequate, are ready to plunge into bustling activity, confident that they know what to do and how to do it. Perhaps those repressive parish priests were wise to use the curb. It is strange but true that in this twentieth century of Christianity we do not yet know how to preach the gospel. We may be certain of this, however: without a prayerful inner life, disappointment and unfruitfulness will mark the experience of priesthood.

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CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN A SECULAR SOCIETY, ed. Bernard Tucker. *Sheed and Ward*, London, 1968. 242 pp. 32s.

This is not a symposium in the normal sense, but a collection of essays loosely grouped round the subject of Catholic education in our present society. The editor prudently forestalls objection by warning the reader that this is not going to be a 'for' or 'against' argument, and that his aim is to provide a varied assortment of material for future discussion rather than to look for a unifying principle. This aim he has achieved. To one reader at least, the contribution which seemed most relevant to the English situation was the lucid and unpretentious essay written by two French teachers, Monique Aubry and Jacques Dard of the Equipes Enseignantes de France. The translator of this chapter (thanked in the preface but not mentioned by name) is to be congratulated on his workmanship. The essay reads like the work of one person, and its modesty of approach is enhanced by its economy in style and its clarity. Basing their suggestions on their long experience of working as Christian teachers in state schools, the writers claim that it is no bad thing for a child to learn early that believers are outnumbered by unbelievers. Their experience has led them to believe that a child's faith will become more truly personal and more deeply rooted if he learns how to live in a pluralist society, since

the Church is not just one element in such a society. Their approach, however, is neither purely empirical nor purely expedient. They end by providing a solid theological reason for their suggestions, namely, that the Church should practise poverty not just materially but also in her methods of evangelization. The spirituality of this chapter is reminiscent of that of Charles de Foucauld.

It would be captious to complain that the phrase 'in a Secular Society' begs one question and by-passes another, since it is a handy title of which the everyday meaning is clear enough. Nevertheless, the note of defensiveness is a recurring feature in more than one essay. One chapter (and a vigorous chapter) begins, indeed, with the words: 'Two of the commonest criticisms of the Catholic position'. Nor is this altogether surprising. The Council's Declaration on Christian education, for all its positive claim that the Church must care for the 'whole life of man' carries faint overtones of regret in the subsequent words 'even his life on earth in so far as it is connected with his heavenly calling'. The material provided in this collection, useful as it is for discussion, needs to be studied in the light of Harvey Cox's recent analysis of secularization as the fruit and not the enemy of Christianity.

M. A. WILEMAN

METHODISM DIVIDED. A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, by Robert Currie. *Faber and Faber*, London, 1968. 348 pp. 63s.

Methodism Divided is an impressive study of the forces that created factions within and break-away movements from the Wesleyan Church after the death of John Wesley, and of the factors which, subsequently, promoted the gradual re-unification of Methodism, cul-

minating in the 1932 creation of the Methodist Church in the U.K. In the course of this analysis Dr Currie lays bare the conflicts which emerged between the laity and the ministry, the centralized administration of the connexional hierarchy (notably the Wesleyan)

and the local chapel community, the sacramentalists and the revivalists. The fragmentation of the people called Methodist into various separate groups represented different organizational solutions to these conflicts. The denominations so formed tended to form into a status hierarchy indicative of the class composition of their adherents. Thus, if Wesleyanism and the New Connexion could be characterized as 'respectable' denominations because their members shared in 'the steady prosperity of the country', the Primitive Methodists, by contrast, were seen as 'raised up in the Providence of God to penetrate to a deeper substratum of society than any other denomination'. The attributed social inferiority of the Primitives, 'these noisy ranters', was echoed also in the 'respectable' assessment of the Bible Christians, as a collection of 'Devonians and Cornishmen waiting with open mouths in their little antiquated chapels among the hills' for whatever was given or told them.

How then is the process of re-unification explained? On the basis of a detailed statistical analysis, Dr Currie draws the conclusion that 'a denomination with a falling membership to population ratio, reduced turnover, ageing membership and dwindling frontal growth is ready for the lateral growth opportunities available in the ecumenical option' (p. 110). Ecumenicalism is born of hope in adversity. There is, however, a formidable sting in the tail of this analysis since Dr Currie suggests that the hope thus begotten is illusory. A membership decrease of 140,000 between 1932 and 1964 hardly justifies the assertion in a 1929 number of the *Methodist Recorder* that 'with the consummation of union a great forward movement on quite unprecedented lines is anticipated; is indeed inevitable'. And Dr Currie can be excused some cynicism relating to the behaviour of the ecclesiastical politicians when he notes that while, in public meetings, ecumenical speakers were promoting the vision of the great forward movement, in committee meetings in 1930 planning for ministerial recruitment to the theological colleges was based upon an expected decrease of 14 per cent for that decade. As he rightly says, these cuts would make sense if the denominational leaders had by this time concluded that the united church would not grow but decline.

Dr Currie does not consider in great detail the present Anglican-Methodist negotiations, but he does find considerably irony in the fact that the same discredited arguments are being re-deployed. In 1965 the Methodist Conference stood on its autocratic right to be master in its own house and over-rode manifest and widespread grass-roots objections, as recorded in quarterly meeting voting on the matter, and agreed to enter into detailed negotiations with the Anglican Church to the end that it might form an organic union and 'take episcopacy into its system'. The extrapolation from Currie's analysis is that this bureaucratic solution to the problem of declining membership, with its talk of efficiency and rationalization of resources, will not in fact succeed.

There is, one may note, an unresolved paradox in the study. The decline in Methodist membership is seen as one effect of the secularization process: the spread of knowledge and education in a science-based industrial society erodes rigid belief systems. This same process is seen as pre-disposing religious organizations, such as Methodism, towards ecumenicalism: 'looser commitments at the level of belief mean looser denominational commitments and muted inter-denominational hostilities' (p. 313). Yet as an institutionalized response to a secular society ecumenicalism is, nevertheless, inadequate. It is as though institutionalized Christianity is sowing the seeds of its own destruction. Indeed, Dr Currie generalizes, from what can reasonably be called a strategic case study, when he concludes: 'the hope that ecumenicalism will be the salvation of Christianity seems illusory' (p. 316). Dr Currie himself puts forward no alternative grounds upon which hope may realistically be grounded. One is left with questions. Is the author silently inviting us to contemplate the ushering in of the post-Christian era? Must the salvation of Christianity be thought of in terms of bureaucratic solutions? Can one develop a sense of the Church as community over and against the Church as bureaucracy? Can Christian discipleship be meaningfully separated from the institutions which we now call churches?

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