

There is no doubt that some connexion will have to be traced between this kind of *gratia sanans* and more truly sanctifying grace, but it will, I suspect, be tangential.

An analysis of this kind, which means unpacking the 'charismatic' package, should make it more possible for us to consider what the real potential value of the 'charismatic movement' is, as well as highlighting some of the hazards involved in it. Contrary to what seems to be becoming the normal style of self-presentation on the part of the movement itself, I think we shall probably have to conclude that it has little which is original or helpful to say about sanctifying grace; if it wishes to take its stand on that, it should drop the jargon of Pentecostalism and stop referring to itself as a 'charismatic' movement. But maybe its real asset is precisely its interest in charisms and particularly in glossolalia. But in that case it will have to make rather more humble claims about its role in the renewing of church life and rather less comprehensive claims on pneumatology and spirituality.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN CHRISTIANITY II

FERGUS KERR O.P.

The restoration of churchly unity among all Christians is the agreed aim of ecumenical work. It is the programme announced in the opening phrase—*Unitas redintegratio*—of the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism (which is thus also the title). Such phraseology suggests that the unity to be restored did at some stage actually exist—that there was once, historically and empirically, an "undivided Church", prior to the conflicts among Christians that gave rise to schisms and heresies. Reflective study of church history seems, however, to keep pushing further and further back to the point at which the Church was visibly and organically one. The Decree of Ecumenism dates the first of the divisions at the refusal of what was to become the Nestorian Church to accept the dogmatic pronouncement of the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. The convoking of that council had itself been an attempt to restore Christian unity. The further one goes back into history the more evident it becomes that it has always been necessary to restore unity. The "undivided Church" begins to look more like an endless task rather than any historically dateable empirical reality. The variety and complexity of divisions among Christians become increasingly obvious. It is not at all clear that anybody, either in

the World Council of Churches or in the Catholic Church, not to mention the many other participants, has yet succeeded in working out a doctrine of the Church which does justice to the tangled anomalies of the situation.

I

The divisions are clearly summarised in the Decree on Ecumenism. It distinguishes between two principal categories of *scissiones*, "rendings that affect the seamless robe of Christ" (par. 13). The language of "scission", it may be noted in passing, has plainly been adopted with the deliberate intention of suspending the prejudices that the traditional terminology of "schism" and "heresy" inevitably propagates. For the first time, then, in an official Roman document, a new approach is adumbrated to the whole question of Christian disunity. The few years since 1964, when this text first appeared, have not been sufficient for its implications to be generally assimilated. It contains an ecclesiology which (as we shall see in a moment) is scarcely compatible with what certain other Vatican II texts maintain.

The first category of splits in the Church occurred, so we are told, "either from contesting the dogmatic pronouncements of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, or later on by the breakdown of ecclesiastical communion between the Eastern patriarchates and the Roman see". Thus, from as early as the first half of the fifth century, the non-Chalcedonian Churches, whether "Nestorian" or "Monophysite", like the Assyrians or the Armenians, have gone their own way, out of ecclesiastical communion with the Orthodox as well as with Rome. Tiny remnants as such communities now are, often exiled and scattered, the very existence of these non-Chalcedonian Churches must prevent us in the west from using even the Council of Chalcedon as the touchstone of unity. It is now questioned whether their Christological doctrine was ever substantially different from Orthodox and Catholic doctrine, though their modern descendants show little sign of wanting to subscribe to Chalcedon after all. Their traditions (very diverse) of worship, spirituality, and martyrdom, cannot fail to move anybody who takes the trouble to find out about them. The Nestorian Church, for example, which has always called itself simply "the Church of the East", has maintained, during fifteen hundred years of isolation and persecution, a doctrine of the sacrificial character of the eucharist against which the Catholic tradition would be somewhat embarrassed to measure itself. In fact, since the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission's statement on the eucharist, it is the Nestorians who would need to be convinced of the soundness of Roman eucharistic doctrine, perhaps in the past but certainly today, before there could be progress towards communion. Catholics do not question the validity of the sacrament of Holy Order in the Nestorian Church. On the other hand,

Nestorians refused, and apparently still refuse, to speak of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God, *Theotokos*, on the grounds that such language is incompatible with belief in the real humanity of Christ. They fear that when we speak of Mary as Mother of God we fall into the heresy of saying that, in the person of the incarnate Christ, there was but a single, and that a divine, nature: that we fall into a form of Monophysitism. The Catholic Church is thus in the somewhat curious position of recognizing the validity of the sacrament of Holy Order among Christians with a high doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice but who refuse to speak of Mary as Mother of God. Catholic thinking and devotion about the priesthood and the eucharist are so deeply interwoven with the cult of Our Lady that the Nestorian emphasis seems very shocking to us. Such are the anomalies of our divisions, however, that it is possible for us to doubt the validity of the orders of Anglican clergymen who have a profound devotion to the Mother of God, while we recognize the orders of Nestorian bishops with whom we parted company at Chalcedon because they regard our Marian piety as verging on Monophysite error. This is not an isolated example.

The breakdown (*solutio* in the Latin: “loosening, dissolving”) of communion between the Orthodox and Rome is dated from the eleventh century. In the Decree on Ecumenism, the Orthodox churches are treated as “sisters” of the Roman Church (par. 14): they “have always gone their own way”; they have had *ab origine* “a treasury from which the Church of the West has amply drawn for its liturgy, spiritual tradition and jurisprudence”; and “through the celebration of the eucharist of the Lord in each of these Churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature” (par.15). These paragraphs, which so generously and openly acknowledge the Orthodox Churches as sister Churches of the Roman Church, and far from her defective sisters, are hard to reconcile with that more customary ecclesiology which surfaces, for example, in the famous footnote to the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*: “Without hierarchical communion, the sacramental-ontological ministry, which is to be distinguished from the canonical-juridical aspect, *cannot* be exercised . . . questions of liceity and validity are left to theologians to discuss, specifically as regards the power exercised *de facto* among the separated Eastern Christians, to explain which there are various opinions”. Paradoxically enough, this text was in fact written to protect the independent reality of the Orthodox Churches. The stress in *Lumen gentium* on the necessity of communion with Rome for discharging episcopal office is so strong that it would seem to deny the reality of the Orthodox sacraments: “without hierarchical communion, the sacramental-ontological ministry . . . *cannot* be exercised” (italics in the original text). But perplexingly enough, after that apparently categorical statement, the question is evidently

left open! The incoherence of this footnote marks a decisive moment in the shift of Roman ecclesiology towards acknowledging that the relationship that exists, and must exist, between bishops and pope within the Roman Church is quite different from the relationship that must exist between other bishops and the pope. The ambiguity was plain to many observers at the time, but the behaviour of Paul VI since the Council seems to confirm that the new approach to the Orthodox Churches has taken root.

Practice, in such matters, means far more than theory. The mutual anathemas exchanged in the year 1054 were withdrawn on 7th December 1965, in a historic gesture, when Pope Paul exchanged embraces with the envoy of the Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople. Ten years later, to commemorate this event, there was a solemn eucharist in the Sistine Chapel on 14th December 1975, at the end of which Paul VI completely upset protocol and astonished everybody by kneeling to kiss the feet of Metropolitan Méliton of Chalcedon, the representative on that occasion of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Just sixteen centuries previously, in the autumn of 375, St Basil the Great was writing of a proposed visit by St Gregory of Nyssa to Pope Damasus in these terms:

“I know that he (Gregory) is quite inexperienced in ecclesiastical matters: and that although his dealings would inspire respect with a kindly man and be worth much, yet with a high and elevated personage, one occupying a lofty seat, and therefore unable to listen to men who from a lowly position on the ground would tell him the truth—what advantage could accrue to our common interests from the converse of such a man as Gregory, who has a character foreign to servile flattery” (*Letters*, No. 215).

That has been the Orthodox image of the pope ever since; for that matter, it has also dominated in the west (cf “The primacy of Peter: theology and ideology”, an important essay by Cornelius Ernst, *New Blackfriars*, 1969, pp. 347-355 and 399-404). It is only fifteen years since protocol required that even a bishop should kiss the pope’s foot. The beginning of the end of that image of the papacy which was initiated by John XXIII has been carried through to its logical conclusion in the historic gesture of Paul VI: an act of humility, in a public and liturgical setting, which inaugurates a completely new churchly relationship between Rome and the ancient churches of the East. A whole way of being a Catholic began to crack when bishops no longer had to kiss the pope’s feet (the implications are not at all generally understood yet); when Paul VI kissed the patriarch’s envoy’s feet a whole new vision of the Church was prefigured.

Much theological work remains to be done, and years may well pass before East and West come together in full communion. For one thing, the Latin Church, although very diverse within itself

and by far the most numerous, is a single body, whereas the Orthodox Churches, autocephalous and often very much isolated from one another, afflicted by some mutual suspicion and sometimes subject to grievous political pressure, have great difficulty in reaching a common mind, on their attitude to Rome as on many other matters. Again, by western standards, their pace is unbearably slow: for nearly fifty years they have been talking about holding a General Council. In the meantime, however, many multilateral conversations at more or less official ecclesiastical level are going on. If the recent proposal by Metropolitan Paul Gregorios is taken up, that a new organization should be created, distinct from the World Council of Churches, in which representatives of the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, the Byzantine Orthodox Churches, and the Church of Rome, might meet to confront the problems which they have in common, the present logjam may be broken. It would be a nice irony if it were to take the participation of those who never accepted the Council of Chalcedon to bring Orthodox and Catholics into communion. Since it is inconceivable that they will ever deny the truth that they sought to save by staying away from Chalcedon, and equally unlikely that the Orthodox will ever accept the West's insertion into the Creed of the "filioque", not to mention many other matters, while Rome will not change on anything essential, that future eucharistic communion must be able to find ways of containing some quite radical theological diversity.

The second category of division of which the Decree on Ecumenism speaks (par. 13) are the divisions which "arose in the West as a result of the events commonly referred to as the Reformation". It is worth noting that the text spoke until its final version of divisions "in the Western Church itself": Pope Paul himself made a last-minute alteration. Here again the text betrays a certain tension between two divergent ecclesiologies. The authors of the document were prepared to speak of the Reformation divisions in the Western Church; Paul VI clearly felt that this was going too far.¹ Perhaps the trouble came from the introduction of the word "Communions", to distinguish between the Orthodox *Churches* and the Reformed *Communions*: a distinction that marks the turning-point in Catholic thinking about the "ecclesiality" of Protestant "Churches". Since these events that we call the Reformation, so the Decree reads, "several national or confessional *communiones* have been separated from the Roman see". The text goes on to say that "among those, *scil.* communions, in which Catholic traditions and structures continue in part, the Anglican

¹ It is perhaps worth noticing that the Council of Trent showed no such inhibition: ". . . Dei Ecclesia misere nunc exagitur et in multas ac varias partes scinditur. . ." (Decr. de SS. Eucharistia). *Ed.*

communion occupies a special place". But one may well wonder if the Anglican Communion, as such, is either a national or a confessional *communio*. It would surely only be the Church of England that might be described as a *communio nationalis*—but that is precisely the *communio* of which Paul VI spoke at the canonization of the English and Welsh martyrs as a "sister Church". The fact is surely that the word "communion" is doing too much work, not to say concealing some incompatible ideas. In its Greek form as "koinonia" the word appears to play a central role in the ARCIC Statement on Authority (Venice, 1976).

Much more evidence might be quoted, but it is clear enough from what has been said that the historic divisions between the Churches (including the "communions") are being undermined on all sides, but there is too much overlapping and intersecting activity for anyone yet to be in a position to work out a single coherent theory to account for it all. It is plain that, as Cardinal Hume said last year:

"We do not yet know what diversity of doctrinal emphasis or differences of practice will not only be permissible but also desirable".

II

All along, of course, since ecumenism first began, people have been nourished by the New Testament vision of the Church. They have quoted St John, who bears witness to Christ's own ardent prayer that his disciples might "all be one", that "they may become perfectly one" (John 17: 21, 23, etc). They have also been buoyed up, more or less explicitly, by St Luke's picture of the earliest Christian community: "All who believed were together and had all things in common". and so on (Acts 2: 42 ff; 4: 32 ff). But Christ's prayer might itself suggest that the disciples were already not altogether united; and Luke certainly presents a very different picture of the earliest Church.

We need not go into all the problems as to whether the Acts of the Apostles is a record of the earliest phase of the Church, written at the time of the events described, or at any rate "just as they were delivered to us" (Luke 1:2), or simply a picture of what Luke imagined it must have been like, composed half a century after the events described, with little in the way of precise information and accurate reminiscence to go on. In either case, the casual reference, showing no surprise and not in the least apologetic or reproachful, to how "the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6: 1) deserves much more attention than it usually receives in ecumenical theology. It is perhaps over-dramatic to speak, as Ernst Haenchen does, of "the first confessional schism in church history"; but a careful examination of the text and subsequent developments points in that direction.

There is no question that the scene is laid at the earliest period of church history—before the martyrdom of Stephen (for which the story serves as an introduction), and thus before the conversion of Paul. It is commonly calculated that Paul had his revelation of the Resurrection of Christ some two, or at most five years, after the crucifixion. Luke is thus taking it for granted that it is not at all odd that, within less than five years of the revelatory moment by which the Christian movement was constituted, there should be this rift between the Hellenists and the Hebrews in Jerusalem. The murmuring (in Greek *goggusmos*: complaining, whispering, secret talk, often of the hole-and-corner, back-kitchen type of grumbling) had arisen among the Hellenists because their widows were being persistently neglected (that is the sense of the Greek verb) in the daily distribution: they clearly did not always have everything in common! It may safely be assumed that the *Hellenistoi* were Greek-speaking Jews from the Hellenistic world who had settled in Jerusalem and gone over to the way of Christ. Many Jews in the diaspora sought to end their days in the Holy City, or at least to go there on pilgrimage. We know that many settled in Jerusalem. Since they were often older people it would not be surprising that they might have an undue number of widows among them. The *Hebraioi*, by contrast, were obviously Aramaic-speaking Jews born in Palestine, such as Peter and the rest of the apostles.

At the earliest stage, then, the Church was not altogether of “one heart and soul” (Acts 4: 32). The grievance of the Greek-speaking converts was dealt with, according to Luke, by their being allowed to pick out seven men from among themselves who might be appointed to the duty of “serving tables”. This was to enable the Twelve to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6: 2 and 4). It is possible that this “serving tables”, *diakonein trapezais*, covers what was to become presiding at the eucharist as well as overseeing the welfare of the poorer members of the congregation: at this stage the Lord’s Supper would probably still have been a full meal (as it was perhaps ceasing to be in Corinth, at Paul’s insistence, some twenty years later: cf I Corinthians 11:20 ff). But the strange feature of the story is that two of the men thus appointed to the office of “serving tables” are immediately portrayed as preachers of the word. Philip went down to Samaria and proclaimed the Christ (Acts 8: 5). This was after Stephen had been drawn out by a group of Jews from a Greek-speaking synagogue to speak what they regarded as “blasphemous words against Moses and God”. Stephen is finally condemned and stoned to death because he speaks words against this holy place (the Temple) and against the law (the *Torah*). As he dies, full of the Holy Spirit, he had a vision of the Glory of God, with Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7: 55-56). On

the day of his death, so we are then told (Acts 8: 1), a great persecution arose against the Church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered, *except the apostles*.

Stephen provoked martyrdom, Philip went to Samaria, but Peter and the rest of the apostles were able to stay in Jerusalem. The failure in the "community of goods" in the Jerusalem community which occasioned the formal erection of a Hellenistic congregation with its own ministers, as distinct then from the company of those over which Peter and the others presided, was surely only one aspect of a much greater tension between the two groups. At this stage, whatever Peter and the *Hebraoi* were preaching, it was nothing like so provocative to people in Jerusalem as the kind of thing that the *Hellenistoi*, particularly Stephen, were saying. Was it that, as Peter and the others were day by day attending the Temple together (Acts 2: 46), praising God and having favour with all the people, Stephen and his colleagues were denouncing the Temple?

The contrast is striking between Stephen's proclamation of the coming of the Righteous One (Acts 7: 52) and Peter's proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead (Acts 4: 2). At no point in Stephen's exceptionally lengthy statement addressed to the Sanhedrin is there even the slightest allusion to the Resurrection. Jesus is the prophet raised up from the people as Moses was (Acts 7: 37); as the Righteous One (*zaddiq*) he is the one who fulfils the law of Moses most completely. It is true that he has been betrayed and murdered (7: 52), but no special sacrificial or soteriological significance is attached to his death here. What enraged his listeners so that they ground their teeth against him (7: 54) was Stephen's attack on the Temple and on the Law. He dismisses the Temple as idolatrous, and his whole interpretation of the rejection of the Righteous One is that those who received the Law as delivered by angels simply failed to keep it (7: 53). Peter, on the other hand, in his various sermons, never mentions either the Temple or the Law. He goes up to the Temple at the hour of prayer (3: 1 etc); he remains at home within the precincts and atmosphere of the Temple. He has nothing to say against the Law or the customs of Moses. The Temple authorities and the Sadducees are represented as being "annoyed" because Peter and John were "teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (4: 2). It was perhaps the Temple authorities who were annoyed at the sight of these lay men daring to "teach the people", whereas the Sadducees, the high-priestly party who rejected the idea of the resurrection altogether, must have been more disturbed on that score. There is no surprise that people should be talking about the resurrection from the dead; on the contrary, whether they held with it or not, everybody knew what the belief involved. It was the claim that the resurrection from the dead had begun in Jesus—

that the God of the patriarchs had glorified his servant Jesus, the one who was holy and righteous (3: 13)—that caused all the trouble. People were not astonished to hear of there being resurrection from the dead; what they found it hard to believe was that the resurrection had begun in the case of *Jesus*—because this meant that he had been exalted as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5: 31).

The differences between the Hellenists and the Hebrews must have gone much deeper than the question of the care of the widows. The Hellenists were the ones who were persecuted and scattered after Stephen's death, whereas Peter and the others were apparently able to remain unmolested in Jerusalem. This can only mean that, for all their preaching of the resurrection from the dead in Jesus, Peter and the others did not yet constitute a serious threat to the Temple and the Law. Their message, behaviour, and stance were evidently not so different from those of their fellow Jews that they stood out in the way that Stephen clearly did, in his denunciation of the Temple and his reinterpretation of the history of Israel and the meaning of the Law. The Christian movement originated and took shape in the context of a variety of contemporary Jewish movements. The Church was born in conflict; as the writings of Paul, Matthew and John in particular all show, Christian theology has been polemical from the start. But if we are to take Luke's account seriously, we must recognize that the rift with the Jewish matrix of Temple and Law which opened the space for the formation of the early Church (a process that took half a century) included a certain difference within the Christian movement itself. In particular, within the first two or three years of the Resurrection of Christ, Hellenistic Jews like Stephen and Aramaic-speaking Jews like Peter, *Hellenistoi* and *Hebraioi*, were diverging quite significantly in their attitude to Temple and Law. This reflects the problem that any missionary has to face: some will always want to force the pace and insist on the newness of the message and the discontinuity with the past, while others will go more patiently, seeking not to outrage people too much. But it is not merely a question of missiological tactics. Nor is it ever possible to decide which of the two is right. If the whole power of the law of the New Covenant is, as St Thomas says (Ia IIae, 106, 1), the grace of the Holy Spirit, expressed in and realized through the personal act and virtue of faith, the Christian movement must be understood as a power of transformation rather than a fixed body of doctrine or a static institution. It will always depend on what there is to be transformed, and the faithful will always differ in their perception of that and thus in the language and the action that they prefer. The exodus of the first Christians from their (no doubt multifarious) Jewish background was marked by precisely this sort of internal difference.

Conclusion

The quest for the “undivided Church” thus leads to St Luke’s picture of the difference of practice and belief between the Hellenists and the Hebrews in the first two or three years of the Church’s existence in Jerusalem. While the message of Peter and the message of Stephen could not be described as being mutually exclusive, the difference between them should not be underestimated. To proclaim the resurrection from the dead in Jesus, while continuing to worship in the Temple and to abide by the Law, is a very different emphasis from proclaiming the coming of the Righteous One, while violently denouncing the Temple and reinterpreting the Law. These seem to be “positions” that are all but incompatible with each other. While it does not yet seem possible to answer Cardinal Hume’s question, as to what diversity of doctrinal emphasis or difference of practice is permissible and even desirable, precisely because this will have to be worked out, we may surely allow that the divergence that is endurable and even essential must be much greater than most of us are accustomed to suppose. This does not mean that anything and everything may be contained within the Catholic communion. For one thing, there are many Christians who see no reason to belong to a church at all, and whom it would thus be futile to gather into communion with the Catholic Church. But the proposal that Metropolitan Paul Gregorios has made, that (in effect) the catalyst in the return of Rome into full churchly communion with the ancient patriarchal Churches may be the participation of the non-Chalcedonian Churches, includes a summons to *renewal* as the concomitant of union. That was, of course, the emphasis at Vatican II. It will take prophetic and paradigmatic gestures, such as Pope Paul’s, as well as much more theological labour and increase of mutual confidence, to continue the process. How many Catholics even know that the pope has kissed a Greek bishop’s feet? And how many even begin to grasp the implications, for our understanding of the papacy and thus for our understanding of the Church, embodied in that simple but historic act?

COMMENT continued from page 343

can never be mere scholarship or the mere translation of a tradition, but a continual new start, a continual confrontation of the gospel with experience, that we need and have a community devoted to theology as other communities are devoted to healing or schooling or the pastoral ministry. Whether in fact we provide that support and whether it results in much theology being done is, of course, another question, but anyway this issue is offered as a fairly random sample of the process.

H.McC