

IN MEMORIAM

Augustin, Cardinal Bea

THE LAST MONTHS of 1968 saw two great figures pass from the scene of living Christendom into the company of the saints, Karl Barth and Augustine Bea. From origins in two very different traditions it was the study of the same Revelation which brought them to be triumphant men of action in the Church and architects, under God, of her future.

Cardinal Bea's *curriculum vitae* is now familiar, and need not be repeated. One of the important features of it which should be brought forward and emphasized is that it was Pius XII who nurtured and promoted him to the offices from which he was able to wield such great influence in the Church. He became head of the Biblical Institute and private confessor to the Pope. Whether Pius XII would have welcomed all the consequences of this promotion had he lived to know of them, is known only to God, and it is unprofitable to speculate. But one of the most important of them was that they gave Bea a close personal experience of some of the most serious difficulties in the way of reformation in the Church. At the Biblical Institute he experienced directly, and suffered from, the extremely intransigent attitudes of some members of the staff of the Lateran University. And further than that, after the formation of the Secretariate for the Union of Christians, and his promotion to be the head of it, he learnt how deeply and relentlessly opposition to progress was built into the administrative departments of the Vatican itself. It is now a matter of common knowledge that when Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury visited Pope John XXIII in November 1960, the Cardinal Secretary of State did his best to prevent Cardinal Bea and the Archbishop from meeting. These manoeuvres were discovered in time, and prevented, by the Pope himself. The meeting took place in circumstances of the greatest concord, and the present happy state of anglican – roman catholic relationships can be said, officially, to date from it.

Of Bea's influence on the Council much has been written and there remains much to say. It is to be hoped that the achievements of this saint of God will be minutely chronicled. Although this brief monogram can say nothing that has not been said before, it is hoped

that it may help to portray the stature of this man as seen from outside the roman communion.

First it should be said that the non-roman observers and participants were impressed by what he did for the Council and for the Church herself. Bea was a german brought up among citizens, companions and fellow-students who were familiar with the insights of the Reformation. He must have been aware of the contrast between the mental outlook of such christians and of those whose experience has been cast only among the latin races and in predominantly or even exclusively roman catholic countries. He was aware that the Reformation itself, deep down, in spite of the havoc wrought upon the shape of it by the jealousies of princes, was a catholic reformation at heart, a searching to recover the shape of primitive catholic christendom in doctrine, in worship and in life. He was equally aware of the errors of the reformers, being himself a student of Church history as well as of the Scriptures. And so it was that he was able to demonstrate and to persuade so many that the reforms that he stood for were not so much innovations as the recovery of lost emphases of catholic teaching and practice.

In the sphere of doctrine his greatest triumph was undoubtedly in steering the great Constitution on Divine Revelation to its splendid conclusion. For Bea's purpose was to show that a high place for the authority of scripture, a determination to prune practices and beliefs that did not belong to scripture, and an intimate devotional understanding of the scriptures in daily life were not protestant or novel, but ancient catholic traditions of the Church. It was at this point that he did most to be an effective bridge-builder over to the protestant half of Christendom, where so many were trying to recover from the wreck of biblical fundamentalism an understanding of the place of tradition in the life of the Church.

Ecumenism was given under Bea a very sure foundation, in the doctrine of universal baptism as the common link and in the eucharist as the principal mode of its expression. Here again Bea was able to help persuade his fellow-catholics (many of whom needed a lot of persuading) that in these new attitudes the church of Rome was recovering catholic emphases of which she had lost sight.

New attitudes to the jews, to non-christian religions, to atheism itself were similarly treated and their 'sting' was drawn. Bea was a successful mass-psychiatrist. All these things were made to appear respectable, as new aspects of old truths rather than as jarring departures from the catholic traditions. Above all, he contributed

notably to the debates on the collegiality of bishops, the place of our Lady in the christian economy and to the superb statement on the people of God which is perhaps the crown and glory of *Lumen Gentium*.

To all this must be added the sympathy and understanding which he created with and from the variegated non-roman observers. The Secretariate for the Union of Christians has been established and has become an indispensable part of the Vatican administration in a very short time. Cardinal Bea lived to see it elevated from a secretariate to a department. He was able to enjoy the first stages at least of the setting up of the academic institute at Jerusalem, in the arrangement of which he has been a close adviser of Pope Paul VI.

The sweet smile, the gentle voice, the bent body of the octogenarian will long be remembered by those who knew him. Very few men have been used by God to do so much for his people in so short a time. It was one of the paradoxes of the Vatican Council that though one of its by-products was to procure the retirement of old men who were occupying their offices too long, the Council's two chief architects, Pope John and Cardinal Bea, both became eighty in the course of it.

B. C. PAWLEY

Editorial Note

Fr. Michael Hurley's article The Sacrament of Unity: Intercommunion and some forgotten truths was written before the Ecumenical Commission for England and Wales published their recent statement The Position of the Roman Catholic Church on Intercommunion. As his bibliography indicates, Fr. Hurley is well aware that other communions besides the roman catholic Church do not favour intercommunion; and we are sure that our readers will sense at once that Fr. Hurley is far from 'urging an indiscriminate and unauthorised intercommunion', and is in no way 'moved by emotional pressures'. It is his hope and ours that his prudent and well-weighed arguments in favour of joint celebration of the Eucharist in certain precisely defined circumstances will not only help the continuing theological debate but will assist 'towards the removal of the divisions that as yet prevent the gathering of all Christians in a common celebration of the Eucharist'.