

THE PILGRIMAGE RACKET

By John M. Haffert

Doctor Hans Kueng's book *Reform and Reunion* is probably the most widely read and influential book on the Council. Published in German, then quickly republished in French and English, it carries introductions by two Cardinals.

After admitting that the Protestant reformation was the result of a real need for reform in the Church, Dr. Kueng (Professor of Theology in an Austrian University) shows that the Church is constantly in a state of reformation. The reforms have gone so far and so deep that he suggests perhaps if Martin Luther were alive today he might not have separated from Rome. But meanwhile deep rifts have grown between Protestants and Catholics, and there are certain "preoccupations and complaints" which he suggests as "possibilities" for the present Ecumenical Council. Some of these sixteen possibilities are vague and controversial in the extreme, but here they are:

Sixteen Possibilities

"Hopeless preaching and religious instruction — nonsense or rigidity in the liturgy — the Index (he thinks it should be abolished) — Roman centralism — episcopal bureaucracy — all things wrong with the training of priests — convent and monastic education — political conformism — moral theology especially on atom bombs

and sex — Latin in the liturgy — scandals in the clergy — the fussing over organization and congresses in Catholic societies — Thomism — rationalism — Marianism — the pilgrimage racket."¹

Dr. Kueng doesn't elaborate on these "possibilities" with the exception of Roman centralism and liturgy. And since he is writing of the Church and of the Council especially with a view to a union of all Christian Churches his sixteen "possibilities" touch subjects which are singled out by non-Catholics.

It certainly cannot be hoped that the Ecumenical Council will resolve all these "possibilities", but if the Council makes all Catholic leaders more aware of the things in the Church which need reform . . . this awareness alone will be a tremendous accomplishment.

Since *Catholic Traveler* is the only magazine in the United States dedicated to the subject of Catholic pilgrimages, and since many "pilgrims" will go to Rome during the Ecumenical Council, we might ask what Dr. Kueng might mean by the "Pilgrimage Racket."²

Main Objection.

The main objection to pilgrimages . . . as in the case of relics, sacramentals (such as the Scapular and Rosary), novenas, etc., is that inadequately instructed Christians *might mistake these non-essentials for essentials.*

While Our Lady Herself asked that Her statue be carried in procession at Fatima, and many wonders have resulted, Lucia (only living one of the three who saw Our Lady of Fatima) said: "People would do better to stay home and fulfill their daily duty than to go to Fatima."³

She didn't mean that it was not good to go to Fatima. She meant that some persons who don't go to the Sacraments think they make everything right by making a foot pilgrimage to that holy Shrine. And this is a terrible delusion.

St. John Chrysostom, who longed to make a pilgrimage to Rome, said: "There is no need to cross the seas or fare upon a long journey; let each of us at home invoke God earnestly and He will hear our prayer."⁴ And Saint Gregory Nazianzen saw so many abuses by pilgrims to the Holy Land (persons going out of curiosity and the pleasure of travel rather than for holy purpose) that he advised such persons to stay home.⁵ And Saint Jerome . . . the pilgrim who stayed in Jerusalem after his second trip there . . . warned others that living in Jerusalem was not worthy of praise, *but living well* . . . whether in Jerusalem or elsewhere.⁶

Other Objections

There are three other abuses of pilgrimages which are particularly objectionable:

1) Excessive credulity, either on the part of the pilgrim or on the part of the guardians of Holy Places. While this has greatly decreased in the past fifty years, we find such conflicts as those between claims of the Holy House in Loreto, and those in Nazareth. This is not only a disgrace, but offers injury to souls.⁷

2) Neglect of duties at home for

1) *The Council, Reform and Reunion*, by Hans Kueng, Sheed and Ward, 1961. Pg. 138.

2) There are almost twenty pilgrimage magazines in the rest of the world, including two in Canada and two in Mexico. In France *Le Pelerin* is similar to *Catholic Traveler*, but C.T. is the only magazine in the world which endeavors to cover all the major Shrines.

3) In personal interview with writer of this article, August, 1946.

4) Ad pop. Antioch, Hom. 2, 49, in P.G., XLIX.

5) Ep. ii, 1009, in P.G., XLVI.

6) Ep. 1, cvii in P.L., XXII.

7) There is little question that the house at Loreto is from Nazareth; there are overwhelming proofs from history, science, tradition and authority as well as the confirmation of miracles. But guardians of the house claim the Incarnation took place here while guardians at Nazareth claim that it took place in a cave near where the Holy House is said to have stood . . . on which spot a great Basilica is now under construction. The dispute is most unfortunate and is not an isolated instance. There are many claims and counterclaims over holy places and relics. Some pilgrims prefer to visit places which are relatively indisputable and such action may help to end this unfortunate state of affairs which may create the impression that pilgrimages are a "racket".

the sake of a pilgrimage. This is something different . . . of course . . . than the substitution of a pilgrimage for a devout life (which we have already indicated as the most awful abuse possible).

3) Scandal given by "pilgrims" who do not allow for variations of customs in countries through which they travel.

Once we understand what is to be condemned in pilgrimages we are better able to look at the good side. We can turn our gaze from the pilgrimage as it might degenerate into a racket, pursued solely as an escape or a substitute or for pleasure or financial gain . . . and see the advantages.

First and foremost, a pilgrimage *deepens one's faith*.

The Main Advantage

Perhaps most pilgrims today go to Lourdes. What are they seeking? Cures? Curiosity? Honor Our Lady? Make Reparation?

Whatever purpose the pilgrim has in mind, his experience at Lourdes will most probably be a deeper appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament, a deeper faith, a greater consciousness of the reality of the Blessed Virgin as a gentle Mother, who is close to her children . . .

drawing them to Christ. If they seek cures and are not cured, they become resigned. If they are merely curious, they find a visible evidence of the power of Faith. If they come to honor Our Lady, they get closer to Our Lord. If they want to make reparation, they themselves are most repaired.

Religious Instinct

We should put, at the top of the advantages of any pilgrimage, the *graces that a pilgrimage obtains* by honoring Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints through honor of their holy places.

There are also the *indulgences and privileges* attached to the holy places . . . obtainable only on pilgrimage.

But graces can be obtained at home . . . The Mass said by Father Pio in ecstasy is essentially the same as the Mass said in our parish church this morning. The stations of the cross in my own parish can have the same merit as when made on the Via Dolorosa.

That is why we list the deepening of faith as the first great advantage of a pilgrimage. For even though Our Lord said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and who have believed," how fortunate St. Thomas was! And

what person, regardless of the depth of his faith, can ever again be quite the same after seeing a wonder like the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Patrizia?⁸ or who ever again could not have a new appreciation of the Wonder in the tabernacle after assisting at Mass in the "pit" where, after instituting the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord spent His last night on earth?⁹

Saint John Chrysostom, whom we quoted against the pilgrimage racket above, emphasized the efficacy in arousing devotion of visiting even the "lifeless spots" where the saints lived (In Phil., 702-3). He said: "If I were freed from my labors and my body in sound health I would eagerly make a pilgrimage merely to see the chains that had held St. Paul captive and the prison where he lay."

Above all Saint John Chrysostom . . . like so many other saints . . . longed to go to Rome. He longed even to gaze on the dust of Saint Paul . . . "the dust of the lips that thundered, of the hands that had been fettered, of the eyes that had seen the master."¹⁰

This desire to make a pilgrimage is a religious instinct.¹¹

Other Advantages

Perhaps no man is qualified to speak categorically of a devotion so deeply rooted in nature and so complicated by experience, so enriched by the Church and so often debased, so beneficial to souls and so often misunderstood.

At the end of the fourth century Saints Paula and Eustochium wrote: "Whosoever is noblest in Gaul

(CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE)

8) *Vita di S. Patrizia*, by Rev. Vincenzo Petrillo, published 1939 by APE, Naples. See Chapter XII. (Imprimatur by Archdiocese of Naples).

9) *S. Petrus in Gallicantu*. This "pit" is of recent discovery and was probably not even known when St. Helena built first Church here in fourth century. Its existence was known from Scripture. While he was being led to this prison from the judgment hall of Caiphas, Peter betrayed Our Lord, hence name of Church.

10) See No. 4

11) "Instinctive motion of the human heart . . . found in all religions." "Granting then this instinctive movement of human nature we should expect that in Christianity God would Himself satisfy the craving He had first Himself created."—Rev. Bede Jarrett, O.P., B.A. (Oxon.), S.T.L., in *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Appleton, 1913), Vol. XII, pg. 85. In reference to this matter, please note qualifying statement at conclusion of this article, marked by ref. No. 17.

PHOTOQUIZ WINNERS

Helen Steffaniak, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, was only winner of the Spring Issue of PHOTOQUIZ (See page 17). There was no winner for the Summer issue, so this issue is a repeat . . . with a new prize.

Want a hint? Get together with others who have traveled: They may know the ones you don't . . . Prize upped this issue to \$100! And you can send in as many coupons as you can lay your hands on.

Another hint: All the photos this

time are *famous* religious buildings in Europe . . . except the horses, and they are the most famous bronze horses in the world . . . on one of the most famous churches in the world . . .

Next issue's Quiz will be ENTIRELY OF PICTURES ALREADY PUBLISHED IN CATHOLIC TRAVELER . . . So hope you saved your copies! We know most readers do . . . because the travel information in these pages can be

found nowhere else in a single publication.

LIKED DOING IT

"The research required to complete the PHOTOQUIZ," writes Miss Steffaniak, "is both fascinating and informative. I think your magazine and the photo quiz contest stimulate interest in and acquaint people with the Catholic world. The current CATHOLIC TRAVELER is simply beautiful."