

des Chrétiens', and he still is, calling all Christians to realize the scandal and horror of their divisions and to take here and now the immediate remedy for it—total surrender to Christ, the Master of the impossible, and complete response to his prayer, his supreme desire, *Ut omnes unum sint!*



## ESSAYS IN CHRISTIAN UNITY<sup>1</sup>

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**T**HOSE who have laboured and prayed specially for Christian Unity will read, reread, ponder and treasure this book with great gratitude. We pray that it will be very widely read and studied. Such writing has been awaited by Anglicans for at least a century: we could hardly expect it before when the nation which we represented was still persecuting the Church of Rome in our land. Perhaps it is in the fulness of time that it has come: for the work seems to be in striking concord with the teaching and spirit of Pope Pius XII, the inspired leader whom Providence has given to edify and guide the Church of our day. One of its excellences would seem to be that it indicates practical applications of the latter's counsels in the special conditions of our land.

The essays collected in this volume are of various dates from 1928 to 1954. They are unquestionably occasional utterances. Yet paradoxically enough this volume may well come to be regarded as the classic expression of the oecumenical attitude of Rome. It would deserve this place because of the deep level at which the problems of oecumenism are tackled and the doctrine involved in these expounded; but also by reason of the marked qualification of the writer to fulfil this task. Here is at last an English Roman Catholic leader, and remarkably enough a 'convert' from Anglicanism, who though he has found certainty and peace elsewhere, can see the Church of England clearly and see it whole. (The

<sup>1</sup> *Essays in Christian Unity*. By Henry St John, O.P. (Blackfriars; 12s. 6d.)

apparent impossibility for Roman Catholics of doing this—and admittedly it is difficult even for Anglicans—has been made clear by the current correspondence on the subject of Anglicanism and unity in *The Tablet*.)

Father St John's interest in the subject dates from 1910 when, still an Anglican brought-up in old-fashioned Tractarian ways, he discovered that the deep personal love of Jesus Christ can be found in communions other than that which was then his own. His reception into the Church of Rome took place during the first world war. But he has wide experience of the Anglican Church attained by persevering and discriminating study as well as by personal contact. And he has all the other qualities needed to help us to see ourselves more clearly and to see our brethren aright—charity, candour, patience, practical wisdom, indomitable hope, the capacity of generous appreciation, of compassion and of stern challenging criticism. The Archbishop of Canterbury will benefit as much as Cardinal Griffin by reading this book. We hope it will have its place in every theological college and seminary as well as in every bishop's study in the English-speaking Christian world.

Father St John became a member of the Roman Catholic Church largely as the result of the impression made upon him by Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. He provides a most able and persuasive defence of Newman's theory, though I am far from certain that it is proof against such criticism of Newman as is brought by Doctor Darwell Stone in his book *The Christian Church*. The influence of Newman is very clear in many of these essays, not only in that concerning Infallibility. Father St John seems to have a kindred vision of the massing of the forces of evil over against us and of the consequent need of the Church as the ark and fortress of salvation. With regard to the disciple as well as the master one finds oneself asking whether his faith in the Easter victory of the ascended Lord apprehends vividly enough that the Son of God has already overcome the world and all that it does or can ever contain. But Father St John is more likely on these subjects to move Anglican theological opinion than was his great master. Newman impresses and fascinates the Anglican mind always, but for all his sanctity, eloquence, and brilliance he far less often persuades. Father St John will win attention because he has learnt far more from his greater master, Saint Thomas Aquinas, whose influence on the Church of England has

been always strong and greatest in what was theologically its greatest period. There is the stamp of the sobriety and integrity and good sense of the great master on all his writings, though he keeps wonderfully free from the special technical language of scholasticism.

The early chapters of the book provide a valuable and stimulating *mise en scène* for the discussion of the great questions with regard to Christian unity. Most precious to an Anglican is the clear sounding here of the note of penitence so splendidly struck by Cardinal Pole whose address at the opening of the Council of Trent is here effectively quoted. Here is a worthy reply by an English Catholic to the confession of our own corporate guilt made by the Anglican bishops in the famous Lambeth Appeal. We have been stirred by the striking of this note in the writings of the late Abbé Couturier and Père Congar, of both of whom Father St John often reminds us. We have not found it before in any writing which proceeds from Roman Catholic England. This penitence goes along with a full acknowledgment that the 'objective grace' of God (though not his sacramental grace) is in operation in the spiritual life of Anglicans, conveyed, it may be, through their sacramental ordinances. We are shown unanswerably and once for all that the alleged exclusiveness of Rome is precisely similar in character to ours, in our attitude towards non-conformists. We would wish, however, in this connection that the author showed himself a little more sensitive here and elsewhere as to the extent to which the Church of England at the time of her separation through her hierarchical, sacramental and liturgical ordinances, unlike the protestant bodies, deliberately disclaimed any intention to depart from the unity of the Church.

In the third chapter we find a measured but generous appreciation of the Malines Conversations. It was these that showed the road which Father St John has pursued by means of small conferences between Dominican and other theologians and a group of their Anglo-Catholic counterparts. It is a road along which *tali ductore* striking progress may be made on the road to unity: the walls of misunderstanding and prejudice are quietly but drastically uprooted. The next two chapters give evidence on almost every page of the writer's thorough knowledge of the Anglican Church. His insight has penetrated behind the shell or façade of confusion and compromise and he discerns what lies beneath, a

life in Christ which however ruffled by internal tensions is steadfast, solid, orthodox and liturgical in its roots and fairly well diffused over the whole world. He knows what might be called the anatomy or pathology of the Anglican Church and discriminates clearly between what is truly Anglican and what is exotic in its Anglo-Catholic part.

Father St John pays just and kindly tribute to the services which Anglican scholars and theologians have given to Christendom in the field of Biblical study and that of apologetics. This acts, though not so intended, as an emollient or embrocation for the Anglican reader who is to find his Church in the final chapters most trenchantly arraigned for its readiness to find its final justification in the 'Appeal to Sound Learning'. Of all Father St John's criticisms of the Church of England this perhaps is the most potent and the most timely. In so far as a convinced Anglican can do so, I think that all Father St John's criticism of our Church must be accepted. Of course as an Anglican I claim that there are some to be made on the other side. But so kindly and fair is Father St John's attitude towards us that an Anglo-Catholic can learn not a little from these pages as to how better to esteem his fellow-Anglicans. For instance, in an excellent chapter on Doctrine in the Church of England the writer gives an interesting discussion of the (1938) Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Christian Doctrine in the Church of England. This report is the bugbear of many Anglo-Catholics because of the measure of erroneous belief which it speaks of as tolerated, *not nota bene* permitted, in the Church of England at that date: The document is for that reason patient of grave misuse, as for instance by a Jesuit theologian who in the pages of *Unitas* cited those portions of the Report, as supposedly an official description of Anglicanism, in order to provide a warning to eastern orthodox readers who might feel drawn to think favourably of the Anglican Church. Father St John prefers to speak of the positive contribution of the Report: 'For the first time in history it can be said that the Church of England as a whole, in so far as the commission is representative of it, puts forward a doctrine of the Church, the ministry and the sacraments which is fundamentally catholic in type.'

It is perfectly true that in the Anglican conception of ecclesiastical authority the appeal to sound learning has been made to function in a fashion which it is unfitted to do. Our present crisis

(it is in the strict sense this) with regard to our relations to the Church of South India has brought this home to us. We have discovered that we cannot *upon historical grounds alone* insist upon the episcopal succession as the *esse* of the Church. 'The evidence for Episcopacy has as much or as little support in Scripture and tradition prior to the fourth century as has the Papacy. Looked at from a strictly objective standpoint, both the doctrine of the Apostolic Succession and the doctrinal claims of the Apostolic See are in the same category: they can only be justified and insisted upon in accordance with presuppositions concerning the nature of the Church and her ministry.' So writes Canon Rich in his valuable book *Spiritual Authority in the Church of England*, an Anglican work which Father St John recommends highly. Sound learning has its indispensable place in the development of doctrine, but its right theological use presupposes the dogmatic authority and magisterium of the episcopate and the tradition of the Church. How can this authority express itself effectively unless the Church is organically and visibly one? and how can the Church be guarded in its visible hierarchical unity without a primacy of responsibility endowed with an unique authority equivalent to the weight of that burden?

Father St John has been alert to notice changes for the good in the Church of England during the period of his acquaintanceship with it. May I add one item of observation with regard to the Anglican landscape which he has examined so shrewdly? The greatest single theological influence, with the possible exception of Bishop Gore whom he so usefully corrects on an important point, has been a theologian to whom Bishop Gore himself avowed himself deeply indebted—the Roman Catholic Baron Friedrich von Hügel. This explains to some extent our growing susceptibility to Catholic influence. And would it be an impertinence to note that as an Anglican sees it reflected in this book, there have been recently wonderful growth and amelioration in the immense Catholic world of Rome?

'Rome must be other first', said the Anglican seventeenth-century Archbishop Laud, declining any immediate possibility of reconciliation with Rome. Certainly Laud if he returned from the grave would recognize great differences in the greater Church of the West as it confronts us now. It is true that there seem at first sight to be three great new bolts which have been shot in the door

that shuts us Anglicans out, the three recent dogmatic definitions. But on close examination the Archbishop would find that all are susceptible of being interpreted in a way which leaves them no longer discordant to the gospel. The manner of interpretation is all-important. In what spirit are they to be expounded? Looking around him he would find that the answer would be vitally affected by the upspringing of certain great theological currents submerged in the Roman Church of his day, but now all important in the life of the Church. Biblical study he finds to his amazement is now everywhere one of the great interests of the Church. Patristics claim on all hands the same eager attention. A liturgical movement which secures for the laity a real understanding of and a real part in the Church's worship is beginning to penetrate the whole Church. There is frequent communion everywhere. The theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice has so developed as to leave little trace of the once prevalent insistence as to the fresh slaughter of Christ in each single Mass which so repelled the Anglican reformers. Indeed the Archbishop would find that one widely influential interpretation of the Mass, that of Père de la Taille, is identical in principle with that which an Anglican, Sir Will Spens, developed in the Church of England some years before the appearance of the former's great work. Finally the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the theologian most influential for the moral theologians of his period in the Anglican Church, are now held to constitute the official philosophy of the Church of Rome. Certainly, our Archbishop would say, the road lies open towards mutual understanding.

It is such lights as these that have refreshed and enriched and enlarged the Catholic spirit which breathes through these pages: and of the Anglican Church it must be said that in the formative time of its greatest darkness it lived by these lights. But there is one light brighter still that signally ennobles these pages; and this the Archbishop would reverence most deeply of all, for he found it very hard to enkindle and cherish it in his own communion. That is the light of obedience. It has always been difficult to keep it burning in our Church, and in the light of providence and in that of these pages we begin to see reasons why this is so.

As to the ultimate union doctrinal and sacramental which we so ardently desire, there remain still mountains of difficulty in the way. No one has less need than Fr St John to be reminded that as

an Anglican theologian has said, complacent optimism, no less than pessimism, is treason against hope. But hope, rooted in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the faith that moves mountains, is a Christian duty. And Fr St John has given us in this book the most valuable incentive to hope.



## CHRISTIANITY IN ENGLAND

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

**A**S the liturgical cycle of the Church renews itself, Good Friday and Easter pass in much the same way as they have since the time of Calvary and the finding of the stone rolled back. Seed-time is so perennial that it unites centuries, making little difference between 1620 and 1720, or dates such as 1870 or 1955. The methods of sowing alter as little as those of harvesting: two thousand years bring small change to the shape of cross or sickle. The apparent relationship between religious and agricultural rites might therefore suggest that the Church is as immutable in her outward life as she is in her doctrines. This is not so. *The Church is the people*; her bishops are their leaders, and in a healthy society the two must work and pray in union. Yet between the people and the bishops stand the priests; beneath the soutane and habit (which have remained the same through the ages) there are men who differ from each other, who grow and develop all the time. A modern sermon preached on the Passion in Westminster Cathedral will be less flowery than it was thirty years ago; histrionics do not win converts today. Nor will a sermon preached today be effective if it is delivered in the style of Newman, Faber or Manning. This is something that English Catholics have had to learn by the hard way of experience; this is why—perhaps more than elsewhere—the Lay Apostolate is left with a particularly vital role to play in the conversion of England.

Good Friday this year in London was as I had met it before in Shrewsbury during the war as a soldier, and in Yorkshire as a schoolboy. The morning came into its stride to the accompaniment of somebody practising the scales; the notes tinkled over the small Hampstead back gardens, but became lost and separated