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DIVIDED CHRISTENDOM

TO many the Catholic position regarding reunion must seem paradoxical. To be catholic is to be all-embracing, universal, the opposite to sectarian. And yet the catholic attitude to other christian bodies might seem exclusive in the extreme; one would have thought, perhaps, that the catholic christian might welcome all those who called themselves christians no matter to what congregation they belonged. But the members of the Church of England who claim to belong to the Catholic Church are paradoxically disturbed when they are asked to accept, at least in distant climes, the members of Methodist and other nonconformist bodies to full communion with themselves and to the exchange of pulpits on the part of their ministers. They are disturbed too when a bishop, evidently sincere and determined to cling to the name of Christian, is allowed to exercise his hierarchical position even though he publishes far and wide his fundamental disbelief in the principal tenets of the Christian faith. They may also deplore the movement to allow divorcees into active communion with their Church—at least after a lapse of years, which lapse is apparently to be taken as a substitute for a sacrament of penance. Those who did not understand would say that these three latest incidents of discomfiture for Anglo-Catholics were showing them to be not catholic but insular.

But it is a fact, undeniable by those who begin to understand the terms, that no catholic could agree with any of these three cases in point. They are all profoundly uncatholic in their implications and must be disquieting to those who would remain in the Church of England and still call themselves catholic. For the universality of the Church is not a mere spacial quality which would take in any one in any part of the world at the present moment. In the days when Englishmen looked for a British Empire which was to accept all races and tribes under its beneficent rule they might have been tempted to regard that 'omnium gatherum' as being a good example of universality. But at best this could have been merely an internationalism which would only gradually become a reality as more nations were conquered and brought under the yoke. But the universal Church does not depend upon space or on the arithmetic of numbers for its reality. It has always become increasingly universal in this international way, but it does not depend on this actual extension of its boundaries for its catholicism. It is also universal in time in an increasing manner as the centuries go by and it links the ancient past and the youthful present in an actuality which is beyond the confines of time. Catholicity is not measured by numbers in either of these directions, and the fact that it has no boundaries in this way does not mean that membership in a Catholic Church will be vague and indistinct. On the contrary, the universality of the Church rises from the permanent and indestructible principle upon which it is built and it is for that reason that membership lies within the most clear-cut limits and requires the most precise definition.

The principle of faith is universal as coming from God's infinite life and truth given to us through God made man. Christ the one and only mediator who by his death won the infinite merits of universal salvation made a catholic church with twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples. He revealed that he was the 'principium' and in order that these few should be joined with the principle he required very definite acts of faith and religion; and he then commissioned them to take what was already universal to the whole world—Go teach . . . and baptise . . . all nations. Precisely because in him they possessed all things, they had in their society something which could be accepted by all men. Intended for man it could only be bounded by human nature itself; based on the capacity in the depths of men's souls for eternal life, it had thus also a potential universality.

For these reasons it is of the greatest importance that each individual man should be joined to this principle in the way, the unique way, determined by Christ himself. It might be estimated that the splitting of an atom had the power to drive a thousand factories,

but the manner of splitting the atom would have to be infinitesimally accurate and the means of conveying the power to the factories would have to be worked out so that there was no interruption between the source and the industry. To deny the *principle* of the Catholic faith is to do away with it altogether—it ceases to be Catholic because it ceases to be the faith. The unbelieving bishop, the intercommunion of churches and the denial of marriage laws are all direct attacks on the faith which cannot remain Catholic when it is turned into an amorphous undifferentiated adherence to a few moral urges. Catholicity is therefore clearly defined, simple and direct and opposed of its nature to an eclecticism which has no distinct boundaries or tenets.

This fundamental principle of Catholicity of necessity plays an essential part in any movement towards reunion. And it explains what otherwise might seem the intransigent and even conceited attitude of the Catholic Church towards other christians. No sacrifice of any dogma of the faith can be made without destroying the universality of the Christian religion. To deny one doctrine of the creed of the Church destroys the whole living creed for this very reason that it attacks the principle which gives rise to Catholicity. To anyone who has any sympathy with 'Rome' it is clear that she cannot compromise on the question of truths of faith, be they the great explicit teachings of Christ himself or the subsequent definitions of the Church. He will understand, even if he will not agree with, the apparent demand for 'unconditional surrender' from all Christian opponents. And this should be far clearer now that the South India Scheme and the other embarrassments have appeared. Compromise and the desire to meet other bodies 'half way' will lead inevitably to the destruction of the whole; to embrace other creeds or 'variations' of the one creed will result at once in sectarianism and the abandonment of Catholicism. And if this abandonment is regarded by some as desirable it leaves the demarcation between Catholic (by which we of course mean 'Roman Catholic') and Protestant clearer and easier to understand. The division now lies between Catholics, with whom should be associated any purely schismatic bodies, and all the other Christian Communions which are in fact thoroughly Protestant at heart however many sacraments they may admit or ceremonies perform. The division is now clearer than ever before, and it will result in an even more rigid exterior on the part of the Catholic Church. For this Catholicism must be upheld and any tendency to compromise with the opposed tenets of Protestantism withheld. This may seem to hark back in an orgy of atavism to the days of the Inquisition. Perhaps this is so; but the Inquisition was in

principle a necessary and very praiseworthy institution. The unity, the simplicity, the inviolability of truth must be upheld and the faith of the Catholic Church preserved.

There are of course innumerable points of sympathy between Catholic and non-Catholic, some of which will be recognised in one or two of the articles published in this issue of BLACKFRIARS. But the fundamental paradox will always remain and there will be no hope of an understanding between the two so long as the Protestant refuses to understand why the Catholic cannot compromise and why he seems to expect every other religion to surrender everything it holds dear. Sympathy on this point should help to clear the air and make intelligible Rome's refusal to accept any modification of any doctrine as taught in its purity by herself. The movement towards reunion will actually increase if this position is put frankly before the non-Catholic. For the Church does in fact ask for 'unconditional surrender'; and that claim is part and parcel of its catholicism.

THE EDITOR.

NOTE: BLACKFRIARS has the honour to present the first impressions of two expert Catholic Canonists on the recent proposal for an Anglican Canon Law.

OUR SEPARATED BRETHREN¹

For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body—1 Cor. 12, 13

BY the very fact of baptism men are incorporated into the one Church of Christ. A large number of Christians, it is true, do not consider themselves members of the Mother Church. Yet all those who were baptised in the name of the triune God outside the pale of the Catholic Church belong to her. Everyone wishing to baptise and doing so in the prescribed way, baptises validly, and anyone may do so in case of emergency. The Council of Trent has laid down that whoever denies that baptism, even if administered by heretics, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with the intention of doing what the Church does, is true baptism, shall be anathema. Anyone who has been validly baptised is and remains a member of the Apostolic Church. A son does not cease to be the child of his parents though he grows up far from his home. In like manner the character of regeneration and of membership

¹ Translated from *Die Eine Kirche* of B. Momme Nissen, O.P. (Herder, Switzerland) by Irene Marinoff. The reader is also referred to the precise statement on this subject by Victor White, O.P., in BLACKFRIARS, September, 1943.