

' FAITHS ' AND THE FAITH IN WALES

THE claims of semantics can be illusory, threatening the innocent answer with unsuspected heredities. There is an ever-present gnosticism, heightened nowadays by the methods and vocabulary of psychology, which sees hidden depths of meaning in very ordinary shallows. Yet there can be no denying that discussion too often ends in futility because it has not been preceded by the definition of the terms to be used. This is one of the most frequent sources of disagreement, for instance, in international conferences: "democracy", "free elections", "minorities"—unless there is an honest attempt at determining what the terms *mean*, subsequent disputes will derive from the varying interpretation, held doubtless in all good faith, of such concepts.

In the theological sphere, careful definition of dogmatic truths is an essential prerequisite of their discussion. That is why so much zealous work for Christian reunion has achieved disappointing results: good will has been substituted for the often unpleasant task of establishing the basis of discussion. The result in the end is bound to be inconclusive, for the evasion of the primary meanings of the truths of faith must affect even the most neutral attempts at co-operation. It is true that united action on a specific moral issue need not demand an identity of belief in the Blessed Trinity among the participants. Yet in the long run, and inevitably, action can claim no autonomy from the demands of belief.

A recently published Welsh book, *Ffyrdd a Ffydd* (Denbigh: Gee, 3s. 6d.), which is hardly likely to reach English readers, reveals a new—and very welcome—candour in its approach to this question. Consisting of seven essays on various Christian denominations by accredited representatives, it is concerned with the exposition of varying views as a preliminary to their reconciliation. For a Catholic, much of the information will be valuable: charity alone demands that one should know what others think to be true. And an essay by Dr. Barrett Davies, himself a priest of the Cardiff archdiocese, gives a magisterial summary of the Catholic notion of Faith, for, as he says, "Much of this misunderstanding (i.e. among Christians) arises from the use of the same technical words, which belong to the ancient Christian tradition, but with differences of meaning. Perhaps it would be better if we had different words to signify different things, for there is no danger in connection with terms that are wholly Catholic, 'Trans-substantiation,' for example. Everyone knows that they have a special meaning, and no unpre-

judiced man would dream of employing them without mastering their meaning. But when a Protestant meets words like "church", "faith", "grace", in the course of reading a Catholic book, he thinks, naturally enough, that he is familiar with their meaning, and so he goes on to give them a meaning wholly different from their Catholic sense."

This is well said, and Dr. Barrett Davies goes on to analyse the Catholic meaning of "Faith", showing that any attempt at doctrinal debate must take account of the fixed teaching on the supernatural nature of Faith, its rational *praeambula*, its certitude, etc.—notions which are unfortunately very far removed from contemporary non-Catholic theology, however sympathetic in some—and these secondary—respects it may seem to be to Catholic tradition. A clear statement of Catholic "intransigence" is, then, necessary: in other words, it means the definition of terms, the indication of what is not optional in the sphere of belief. Such plain speaking is a work of the highest charity, however harsh it may seem at the superficial level of debate. It would be no exaggeration to say that the decline of religion itself can largely be attributed to the mistaken idea that an "economy" of doctrine and a kindly "accommodation" of the harder precepts of faith and moral practice will make religion more attractive and extend its influence. The exact opposite is, historically, the case.

The first number of an annual publication, *Efrydiau Catholig* (Llyfrau Sulien, Llanfarian, Aberystwyth, 2s. 6d.) is a most encouraging sign of such a realisation among Welsh Catholics. For, as an explanatory note says, "We Welsh Catholics, few though we are today, believe we have a duty to our nation in the present time of crisis". Part of that duty is assuredly the exposition of Catholic truth, and *Efrydiau Catholig* is to be most warmly welcomed for the authority of its articles, and—an important point—for their consistent literary distinction. A study of old Welsh devotion to our Lady by the Archbishop of Cardiff is followed by a fine ode, in a traditional Welsh metre, to the Archbishop by Mr. Saunders Lewis. Dr. Barrett Davies has a long and closely argued article on the Mystical Body. "Only through our incorporation in Christ can the teaching and nature of the Church be understood", and so fresh an apologetic approach is brilliantly effective. Mr. Saunders Lewis contributes a study of Tudur Aled, one of the last of the classical Welsh poets, a distinguished piece of criticism that makes one hope that before long he may complete his history of Welsh literature. *Efrydiau Catholig* is sponsored by the Cylch Catholig, a society of Welsh-speaking Catholics who, under the active patronage of the Archbishop of Cardiff and the Bishop of Menevia, are

doing a most valuable work in presenting the Catholic faith to Wales in the language of Wales. It is to be hoped that the new venture will be well supported, and even English Catholics can help by giving copies to their Welsh friends who, it will usually be found, will welcome a bit of theology. ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

A FRENCH EXPERIMENT — II.
"ECONOMIE ET HUMANISME"

A Doctrine: The general lines taken at the first meeting have directed subsequent researches; and the results of these are to be found in the twenty-three numbers of the review which have already appeared. Annual sessions of intensive study have been organized for the investigation of particular problems:—

A Session at Sainte Baume, September 1942, on Property and Community.⁽¹⁾

At Grand-Bornand, September 1943, on Principles of Co-ordinated Economy.⁽²⁾

At Ecully, May 1944, The Basis of Humanism.⁽³⁾

Groups of specialists at these sessions gather to discuss their own subjects with special committees on patristics, sociology, etc. And finally the central council harmonizes, co-ordinates and stimulates these enquiries. Some key ideas are now beginning to emerge and are becoming the common property of all those who, rejecting the anarchy of liberalism and the oppression of state control, seek for a world-order in harmony with the principles of a human economy, such as the critical vindication of the community ideal⁽⁴⁾, the movement towards a 'community' formula in business⁽⁵⁾, a revolution in agriculture⁽⁶⁾, the discovery of the scientific basis of regional economy (see note 2), a new approach to town and country planning, the elaboration of a new method for the investigation of sociological

(1) The main findings of this meeting are published in *Propriété et Communauté*, Ed. Economie et Humanisme.

(2) This session used as a basis for its discussions a manifesto which was published in the sixth issue of the review: *L'Ordre communautaire, principes d'une économie humaine*. Ed. Economie et Humanisme.

(3) The results of this session are to appear in two volumes: *Essor de l'humanisme occidental*, and *Confiance dans l'homme*. Ed. Economie et Humanisme.

(4) *Caractères de la communauté*. Ed. Economie et Humanisme.

(5) *Une étape vers la suppression de la condition prolétarienne—La communauté*. Ed. Economie et Humanisme.

(6) *Metier d'agriculture*, by M. Artaud. Ed. Economie et Humanisme.