

increases its own elements of Catholicism the less will be the general diminution of truth which they suffer in their search for unity. Every betrayal of principle in the interests of unity is a diminution of truth and every such diminution makes the true unity of Christendom more difficult of realisation.

It is sometimes urged that any increase of Catholicism or the Catholic mentality within non-Catholic bodies makes individual conversion to the Church less likely. But faith, the light by which a non-Catholic at last sees the true nature and authority of Christ's Church, is a gift of God. Untruth is the only thing that can obscure that light when God offers it to a human soul and Catholics in their work for unity must labour to increase the knowledge of truth and to remove every element of misunderstanding and falsehood, in their own presentation of the Faith as well as in its apprehension by those outside the fold. How and when and to whom God offers the light of Faith we cannot know; our work is to prepare the way for its entrance when he offers it, whether that offer is made by slow degrees, with an ultimate full realisation far in the future or more swiftly to those whom he chooses for an immediate gift.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

ANGLICANISM AND CATHOLICITY

IMPRESSIONS OF A CONTINENTAL OBSERVER

ONCE he has crossed the Channel the continental very quickly discovers that the Church of England is quite unlike the protestant communities he knows in France or Belgium. Instead of bare conventicles he finds churches—very often fine ones, with altar, cross, statues, even red lamps in the sanctuary and confessionals. The liturgical vestments are similar to our own. Some of the services offer the same general characteristics. There are religious communities which are curiously like our monasteries both in their rule and in the piety, earnestness and influence for good of their members. If he is lucky the enquiring visitor may come into contact with members of the Anglican church quite close to his faith or come across theological works in which the vocabulary, the terms of reference and the subjects treated are familiar to him.

The hurried traveller will even be able to go back with the conviction that the things which separate us from the Anglicans are few. There is papal infallibility but this has doubtless been badly explained to them and since its definition the Popes have exercised it so little that Catholic theologians are not even all agreed

as to its exact exercise. The Anglicans use an English liturgy? But there are many languages other than Latin in the Church of Rome. In short, he thinks, there are chiefly stupid misunderstandings and obstinacies. From this point to thinking that Reunion is easy there is only one step, a step which is sometimes crossed and which is the cause of generous overtures doomed to failure. A more prolonged contact with Anglicanism compels one to see the complexity of the problems it sets and to temper his first optimism.

It is so readily imagined on the Continent, especially since the Oxford movement and the Malines conversations, that the Church of England is the High Church or at any rate that the High Church is a very definite part of it and the most numerous part at that. The reality is not so simple.

The Church of England is undergoing a very serious crisis. Since the war, religious practice has dropped very considerably. Indifference to religion and even the loss of moral sense have increased, particularly in the young generations. Anglicanism is suffering the fate of all the Traditions. People were comfortably installed there, through force of habit. Rites, formulae, practice formed part of the even tenor of life but are out of fashion in a world which is restless and taken up with the struggle for money. It is unnecessary to emphasise this, for in every country of Europe the official religion or religion of the majority exhibits the same signs of old age and the same anachronism. But if one no longer finds the same vitality as formerly, one does find in the Church of England the same diversity and that is what strikes the observer at first sight. The Anglo-Catholics form a more homogeneous current than the others, with more uniformity in teaching and among theologians—the appearance of the report on ‘Catholicity’ seems to prove this. It can even be said that it is from their ranks that the majority of those who observe Sunday are recruited, and it is there that the greater number of theological works is found at the present time. But the other currents, Evangelicals, Liberals, which intermingle considerably, are important. The High Church remains a minority among the faithful as a whole. It presents indeed a striking diversity, from the Papalists who are close to Rome and (Anglo) Catholics attached to the creeds, to complete compliance with the prayer book, to Tradition, but opposed to Rome.

An examination of the doctrine confirms this external diversity. Any dogmatic study of Anglicanism comes up against a major difficulty: the absence of an Anglican theology, at least in the sense in which we understand the term. If in the Catholic Church there are schools of thought, attempts to set forth and explain the

truth in different systems, at any rate there is agreement upon the content of this truth. When one wants to know what the Church teaches, all that is necessary is to consult a good manual, Thomist or otherwise. In the case of Anglicanism this would seem impossible. There is no theology, there are only theologians. This does not mean that fantasy and arbitrariness are paramount, but there is no logical system of Anglican theology. There is no theology *of* but *in* the Church of England.

The Reformation wanted to get back to a Christianity nearer the sources, and Anglican theologians, more scholarly than philosophical, are often content with historical or philological expositions, fine in their way, or with commentaries on Scripture. Their research shows a very broad mentality and framework and it is this which prevents the Church of England from being a believe-what-you-like type of church, as is sometimes too hastily said. But when their thought attempts to organise itself, they can only speak for themselves, even when their authority is very great. Their opinion is very much valued, but it is not normative.¹

Of the 39 articles themselves a very broad interpretation is tolerated. They are not bound up with the existence of the Church² and all that is asked is that they shall not be contradicted.³ Sometimes, and of set purpose, they use ambiguous terms.⁴

The continental, then, finds what he calls an absence of doctrinal unity; he finds this linked with a very marked absence of authority and certain Anglicans feel the effects of this painfully on the occasion of events like the Bishop of Birmingham's affirmations or even the decisions on South India. There is no authority able to determine exactly what the teaching is, no authority entrusted with its application in the spheres of law, of liturgy, of the life of the church. There is a will towards imprecision and *laissez-faire* which is a matter of surprise to the Catholic from the continent and which causes astonishment when he comes across the affirmations of catholicity of the Church of England, as in the last Lambeth encyclical 'We, archbishops and bishops of the Holy Catholic Church. . . .'

¹ The Church is not bound by documents of the continental Reformation or by the opinions of individual divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hodgson: *The doctrine of the Church as held and taught in the Ch. of E. Oxford*, 1946, p. 21. Cf. R. Cant on Gore in the *Church Quarterly Review*, July-Sept., 1946.

² v.g. E. J Bicknell: *A theological introduction to the XXXIX Articles*, 1946. pp. 23 ss.

³ E.g. Conference Between W. Laud and Mr Fisher the Jesuit. Edited by C. H. Simpkinson, Macmillan, 1901, p. 59, and Stillingfleet's commentary.

⁴ H.M.S. in the *Church Quarterly Review*, 1934, vol. 112, p. 368.

Yet, when they speak of catholicity, a mark of the Church, Anglicans refer to the classic texts.⁵ The Church is intended for all men, teaches and practises the whole doctrine of salvation in its fulness etc. As in the case of all the moderns, the emphasis is placed on the qualitative aspect of orthodoxy: to be catholic is to live in the fulness and rectitude of the Faith. Faith is a meeting between God and man, man in his whole being, intellectual, spiritual, social. Faith means thought and personal and 'community' life. The truths of Christ are believed. They are lived through him, with him, in him, in the Mystical Body of which he is the head. To be catholic is to be grafted on Christ by the Faith, the Sacraments, life in the Church which is the people of God. In that sense to be christian is to be catholic.⁶ Catholicity is a characteristic 'property' of the Church since it is a mark of her authenticity—in the most obscure member, in the tiniest parish, as in the whole body.

Catholicity is bound up with apostolicity through its temporal dimension which is continuity since Christ; any church claiming to be catholic claims by this very fact to go back in line of direct succession to the Apostles. The Oxford movement insisted strongly on this. In addition, it is bound up with Unity: the true Church, that of the one God, made for all men, must stand alone in the world. It is because she is catholic in her essence that the Church is world-wide, in time and in space, and responds to every aspect and need of man. Christ is the centre of the Universe and the Church must gather men together in him. Plenitude leads to an organic, not to a federal unity. The term catholic implies, then, a quality of universality and unicity which is found in Christ and which is prior even to the existence of Christians, which is to be looked for in the Church's past, to be realised in the present and the future.

But how is catholicity to be recognised? What is the essential point in the content of Faith, in the way of life, which marks catholicity? If one is agreed on the principles and ideal, divergences begin in the practical application.

If Christianity is for all men and if it is the love of God spread throughout the world, it must present great diversity because every man has his own way of expressing his love, dependent on his temperament, race, education. There is no standard love. Yet the

⁵ v.g. Ign. Ant. ad Smyrn VIII, 2. Pol. Mart. VIII, 1, XVI, 2, XIX, 2. Cyr Hier. Cat. XVIII, 23. Vinc. Ler. Comm., 2, etc.

⁶ On this subject read T. A. Lacey, 'Catholicity', London, 1914, p. 16, and the controversy with *The Tablet* published in 1916 by Chatto and Windus.

Church is a community, a person even, and common life in the Church must be possible—which presupposes community of thought, prayer, moral standards. Moreover it must be possible to find the 'essential' of Christ in an authentic Christian or community, even if they are imperfect—and that they always are. How is this essential to be defined? In Scripture alone or in the earliest creeds? Must we stop at the fourth century, at the eleventh, at the sixteenth? Such are the problems endlessly under discussion: the authority of Scripture and Tradition, their interpretation, the infallibility of the Church in practice. We do not intend to go into these problems, merely to set down a few observations.

We believe that on men coming to the faith no more than the necessary should be imposed (Acts: 15, 28) but that, under pain of failing in our mission, they must be introduced to the fulness of life with Christ in the visible Church which he founded and which is his continuation. Now this Church is a living being (Eph. 4, 15, 16) and a Christian of the 20th century must enter into the riches of nineteen centuries of Christianity. In point of fact, some people seem to want to look for the essentials of the Church as an archaeologist does for a treasure buried under centuries of history. Christianity did not suddenly come to a stop at a council but has continued its progress, at the same time remaining true to itself. As a living being who is growing, the Church has developed qualities, has shown aspects hitherto in germ, has defined certain others and this without changing her identity. True catholicity will have to take this movement into consideration. To use scriptural images again, the Church is a field which one cultivates and not a fossil bed, a building which is in the process of construction and not a venerable museum. The present is enriched by the whole past, but it continues it too. The past is not a sealed coffer but a capital of which the 'talents' must bear fruit.

We look to the Church of the past because it seems to us that there we shall find more easily, in its original springing into life and its unsullied purity, the essence of the Message and of life. Is it possible to know life, which is movement, in a dissection which offers nothing but the past? It is impossible to move backwards, and we have to determine the essence of Catholicism in the present, in continuity with the past. It is essential to distinguish the *sine qua non* of the Church from what is a passing incarnation, the mark of a country, of an epoch, of a social class. Let us suppose, for instance, that Christianity had been born in Japan or in South America instead of being born in the Palestine of the Graeco-Roman world. The modes of doctrinal, liturgical, juridical expression would

certainly be different. But it would be the Catholic Church with the same Truth, the same Sacraments, although expressed by other signs, the same authority although with a juridically different hierarchy. Catholicism is not coincident with any one of its forms but in them all lives the same Christ, Truth and Life.

Let us remind ourselves of two facts sometimes forgotten. The first is the existence of 'theological qualifications'. Our controversies lay so much emphasis on our differences that we distort the doctrine of others by overlooking the hierarchy of values. The essence of Roman Catholicism is not devotion to the angels; the essence of Anglicanism is not the refusal of authority, doctrinal ambiguity or royal divorce. A sane theology will not place on the same level belief in the Redemption and that in the guardian angels, faith in the Trinity and that in the material 'fire' of hell. The second fact is the existence in the Church of Rome of different attitudes and traditions.⁷ The Church has taken up different positions, varying according to time and place in different political and social situations. In the west there are different liturgies such as the Dominican rite and in France the rites of Lyons and Bayeux. Again, there is the great diversity of Eastern liturgies and a different canon law for orientals from the Roman one. This shows a respect for tradition, for temperament, a concern for adaptation which at the present time, particularly in France and Germany, is reaching out towards a closer contact with the modern world. Yet it is the same dogma, the same authority, the same Sacraments, the same life and the same order. That is why the continental and the orthodox too⁸ are surprised to find in the Anglican Church not a different temperament and customs but a variety of beliefs, for instance, on the number and value of the Sacraments which, for us, are of the essence of Catholicism. Signs indeed may sometimes differ, explanations too, but the Reality of the Sacrament remains. The systems which try to state exactly (not to explain) the mystery of the Real Presence are many, but all are agreed upon the force of the Word of Christ: 'This is my body'.

Even if, then, the Church of England has Catholic aspects, it is separated in its faith from what we believe to be the essence of Catholicism. That perhaps comes from a mentality which is incompletely catholic. The Church of England has indeed the glory and the weakness of being catholic and protestant at the same time, i.e. of embracing tendencies and traditions which are

⁷ Cf. A letter by E. Every in the *Church Times*, 10th Sept., 1948.

⁸ cf. 'Catholicity', p. 52.

sometimes in opposition.⁹ The temptation is to attempt a compromise. A synthesis would appear difficult because it presupposes a governing idea, an organic unity in movement—which is the very definition of catholicity. This does not mean that the catholic current must absorb the rest, it means that the whole must come to discover the fulness of Christianity and because of that take a catholic attitude.

When the unity of the church in the future is discussed with certain Anglicans, they reply: 'We must be left with freedom to believe or not to believe dogmas which the Apostles or the Fathers have not explicitly laid down in the measure in which we have acquired a personal conviction'. This is to want to limit the content of faith, either by rejecting the nineteen centuries of Christian life or by judging the faith according to the capacity of human intelligence and culture. But faith is essentially a gift of God. It consists not in freedom of investigation but in the act of humility and love of the man who accepts God. Intelligence, whether the scholar's intelligence or the docker's, strives with all the technical means at its disposal to understand, but to do so under the light of grace. Under the features of a man, the faith of the contemporaries of Jesus recognised God. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee . . . Mt. 16, 17.' The good thief recognised him even with features disfigured by suffering. Similarly, faith consists in finding Christ in his mystical body, even when disfigured by our imperfections, in accepting in its entirety the Church which manifests the demands not of a dictatorial human authority, but of the love of Christ. A child trusts its mother. When she gives him a word of advice, issues a prohibition, affirms what is true, he does not answer 'prove it'. He believes because she is his mother, because he is sure of her love and her experience. Later he will understand and will apply the necessary interpretations. If at the outset he were to rebel because of a lack of receptiveness, he would risk never understanding and remaining painfully frustrated. The catholic 'mentality' is a submission, not a blind submission (theological discussions are the proof of this) but one which trusts the authority of Christ in his mystical body. Catholicity is the aptitude of Charity to understand all men, not to impose a theological system upon them; but it also gathers men together in the unity of the truth. For the testimony to these two realities, Christ

⁹ *ibid.* p. 55.

has paid too high a price for us not to safeguard their integrity.¹⁰

Pursuing the course of his reflections in this way, the continental has the impression that he is running into if not a blind alley at least a very much obstructed crossroads. He cannot conclude that Anglicans lack intelligence or are in bad faith, for he has been able to see for himself their culture and sincerity. He cannot find a solution in force, for it would be pretentious and contrary to the catholic mentality to want to impose the Truth. He then wonders if he has understood and expressed the problem correctly? As a good continental he has constructed a logical system of ideas and he is looking for its application in the facts. Perhaps it would be better to approach the problem from another angle. We are accustomed to speak of the catholicity of the Church, of her unity, in intellectual or legal terms. The vital aspect ought not to be neglected. We should find our discussions with Anglicans more satisfactory if the approach was from this point of view. The unity of the church is concerned also with the life of Christian virtues. Thus one is delighted to find that the Anglican's way of life is perhaps nearer to us than his way of thought.

The Oxford movement, through its study of the Fathers, of Tradition, of the Caroline divines, rediscovered the sense of the Church. Whatever may be its real theological contribution, no one calls in question its influence on the actual life of Christians. It has helped its followers to emerge from deism or from the withering narrowness of Puritanism or again from the sentimentalism of religious experience. It has helped men to return to the frequentation of the Sacraments, the sense of what is consecrated and of public worship. The 19th century has seen an extension of missionary activity, of social organisations, of successful attempts at religious life. The discovery was a recovery indeed because it showed a desire for plenitude which is a mark of catholicity. This way of life has also brought to light intellectual aspects which had been forgotten and has led to the deepening of the idea of the Church.

The English temperament is pragmatic. It has always shown a certain mistrust of the brutal application of theoretical systems, but it does believe in realisations, the juxtaposition of facts and men in a non-intellectual logic. The very rise of the Church of England proves this. The reality of life can indeed lead to intellectual dis-

¹⁰ On this point great endeavours would have to be made in the sense of a larger 'incarnation'. Too many Catholics more or less consciously confuse Romanism and Italianism. The letter published by the *Catholic Herald*, Sept. 10th, 1948, entitled 'Catholicity in English dress', should be read.

coveries. In our personal lives there are many examples of ideas which are given formal shape and organised as a result of concrete experiences. The seeming contradictions of our intellectual prejudices have proved themselves in real life, which is one and complex, to be complementary aspects of the same truth. The life of the Church—the history of the sacraments for instance—shows that in very many cases Christian practice has paved the way for theological definitions. With mistakes in detail but correct in its general view, the Christian conscience has grasped gradually, as if by instinct, and it continues to do so, the diversity and the exact characteristics of life with Christ.

This must not be taken to imply that dogma is a mere capturing of the conscience as it reflects Christian life. It is simply a matter of reminding oneself of the reciprocal causality of dogmas and practice, of knowledge and love. Dogmas are not figments of the mind nor jugglery with ideas, but truths revealed by God, to be contemplated and lived. Knowledge of Christ leads to love of him. His concrete love enables one to know him better. Christianity is not indeed a philosophy but a person. So that Christian practice expresses the truth and enables one to enter more deeply into its meaning, since truth and life coincide: the Christ. Theology is not only a matter of dogma. It is spiritual, pastoral, etc., too, and the various aspects must throw light on, direct, specify each other. If catholicity is a plenitude, it takes in the whole of life. The kingdom of God is not an idea which is transformed into facts, nor is it facts which force thought; the kingdom of God is the fact itself, in all its richness, embracing all reality including the intellectual aspect. Christ is Truth, Way, Life, I mean the whole Christ, mystical body and head, the Church.

It will be obvious that to take life as a starting point for the discovery of truths presents certain dangers. Firstly the danger of facility. The natural tendency of man is to take the line of least resistance. Every human group, if one is not careful, drops to its lowest level. The Christian life requires heroism. The Christian's temptation is to be contented with a minimum and gradually to abandon doctrinal, liturgical and moral requirements. The temptation of authority is to justify this minimum to avoid losing members or displeasing them. Through 'fear of trouble', intellectual laziness, practical liberalism, authority comes to deny its very self. 'I am the leader, of course I must follow them', as a certain man said. Refuge is sought in dead traditions which fall to pieces at the first big shock. Nothing is left of Christianity but human attitudes. The sublime folly of the Cross has disappeared, the martyrs afford

subjects for rhetoric but their example no longer has any influence. Charity becomes philanthropy, dogma a witness to the history of thought, Christian practice a code of bourgeois morals, the Church an insurance company. The meaning of the demands of Truth and Love made man, is lost. Christianity is no longer a stumbling block (I Cor. 1, 23) but a gentlemen's agreement.

In the same connection we must beware that the secondary does not supplant the essential nor the letter kill the spirit. The danger of legalism is a permanent one in the Church. There must be organisation and law but the temptation is to take advantage of them. God is no longer loved but one's accounts with him are in order. There is always a danger of devotions taking the place of prayer, of bigotry usurping the place of liturgy, of the means being put before the end.

The authority of the Church has this difficult mission, to help us to keep and develop the catholic sense of the plenitude of Christ. In the decisions which she has to take, she effectively safeguards unity, but in a spirit of richness not of impoverishment. She must not attempt to bring about a unity of compromise which would reduce the essential to a common residue, obtained by abandoning divergences. The unity of the Church is not the juridical or sentimental unity of practically independent Dominions, but that of a family in which each child has its own life, but within the life of the whole, since he shares the same blood, the same heredity the same truths, the same hope.

The mystical Body, in its entirety and in each member, is both an interior and a social reality. Through the logic of life it tends to develop to its fullest extent. A true catholicity must accept the static bases of Scripture and Tradition by integrating them in the movement towards unity, a movement which is at the same time the gathering together of the faithful and the increase of their number, with the demands and riches of Plenitude. Thus the Church incorporates and assimilates the whole human 'paste'. Her catholicity is her aptitude for embracing all and gathering all together, while at the same time retaining 'leaven', quality and vigour. To choose among her dogmas, her practice, her past, is to mutilate Christ. To consider as essential what is merely a personal interpretation or a secondary aspect, and to want to impose this on others, is again to cease to be catholic.

In union with the theologians whose task it is to investigate these matters, Christians, to whatever body they may belong, must discover in the plenitude of life with Christ the richness of the revelation which has been lived for twenty centuries. Reverence for the

Blessed Sacrament will throw light on the Real Presence, the liturgy on the prayer of the Church as a collective person, the love of one's brethren and the apostolate on the unity and catholicity of the kingdom of God. It seems difficult to think that, living with Christ, Christians can fail to make progress in Unity or fail to love its demands. It is from Christ as the starting point that the Catholic Church will reach plenitude. There where the life of Christ is, is catholicity. *Ubi Christus, ibi Ecclesia.*

Such is the direction in which the impressions of a continental in contact with Anglicanism travel. In spite of the difficulties which logic, being of the intellect, may meet with, he retains his hope in life, because he has found among Anglicans loyalty to and love of Christ. Doubtless for an Englishman his reflections have no originality, but from time to time it is essential to come into contact with the evidence. This enables every man to examine his conscience on the catholic quality of his faith and to continue his efforts along the long road which will gather together the separated brethren.

PAUL YELLI (*Translated by K. P.*)

THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND

A MYSTERY AND A PROBLEM

THE 'Conversion of England' presents itself to us both as a problem and a mystery, but for one reason or another we become so preoccupied with the problem that we overlook the mystery. Yet our very handling of the problem is bound to be influenced by our awareness of the mystery. It must be confessed also that the problem has hitherto received only intermittent attention, and that nothing like a strategy of conversion has yet been evolved. It is my contention that our tendency to date has been to view the question as a matter of immediate practical concern demanding immediate action; and there seems moreover to be a belief abroad that this is a problem which will yield like any other to persistence and the correct technique—backed always by the grace of God. Certainly we should be active if only intermittently, but have we any reason for believing that our usual methods of tackling this immense problem are likely to lead to improved results? I would submit that the inevitable sense of frustration which follows on our efforts is due to an insufficient consideration of the truth that the problem is not only a problem, but also a profound mystery.

In its general lines the conversion of a great nation involves