

## BLACKFRIARS

one day take, now in isolation with courage and at a great cost or with others and in comfort or at last in the face of an angry world:

Although the day be ever so long  
At last it ringeth to evensong.

EDITOR.

## OBSERVATIONS

SKETCH. Almost exactly one hundred years ago a small and brilliant group of Oxford dons set out to rouse the Church of England from what appeared a spiritual sleep. The methods they employed were academic: they preached in the University, they wrote tracts which they distributed amongst the country parsonages, and by earnest word and holy life they attracted many of their own sort to their cause: *antiquam exquirite matrem*. Their Church, they said, was no mere sect, not a government department nor an institution offering careers to latitudinarian divines. She was, in spite of the anger and astonishment of her bishops, an integral part of the Catholic Church. They appealed to the Scriptures, to the Fathers, to the ancient liturgies of East and West, and even to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

Driven from Oxford, the Movement made its way among the parishes. The work of revival went on, and now the first centenary has been reached. Much has been accomplished, for there is scarcely a parish in England that has not felt in one way or another the influence of the Oxford Movement. Nor, it would seem, has the Catholic Church in this country lost very much on that account. From the time of Newman onwards the Movement has provided us with a steady stream of converts. If it has deterred many from joining our ranks, as some maintain, it is at least doubtful whether such as are thereby affected might not in any case have remained outside, untouched by our influence.

And the later movement, too, has a lesson to each us— a lesson of enthusiasm for an objective, of single-hearted

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devotion to a cause—which may well make us look to it that we ourselves do not fall behind. It is all rather splendid, this story of heroic effort as seen in the lives of such as Stanton Mackonochie, Neale. But for us it is also unutterably pathetic to see how steadfastly men will cling to an ideal which must ever prove illusory, to see such magnificent enthusiasm misdirected.

Moreover when we consider the present trend of the Movement there is room for some misgivings. No longer does it take its stand on an appeal to the Scriptures and Tradition. The publication of *Lux Mundi* marked a swing to Modernism, and this during the last twenty-five years has become more and more pronounced. Experience is now the criterion by which religion must be tested. The authority of tradition, upon which men like Pusey and Keble built everything, now counts for little. So long as we have the Mass and Confession, it is said, we may think what we will about the Fourth Gospel. The position is illogical, since if we think what we like about the one, we may equally do the same about the others, seeing that both rest to the same extent on the authority of tradition. But this is where Experience comes to the rescue, for by it some things are judged to be essential but others not.

Browsing thus on Lutheran pastures, but at a respectable distance from the leaders of the flock, and never wholly unmindful of their proper food, Anglo-Catholics have travelled far from the position of the Tractarians, and will travel yet further. But their Mother, ever solicitous for them in their wanderings, will never despair of their return:

*et ad Jerusalem  
a Babylonia  
post longa regredi  
tandem exilia.*

POLEMICS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR DISCUSSION. People seem to have made up their minds that the Malines Conferences have ended only in failure. And as a result, to the sadness of many Catholics, the breach between us and Anglicans seems wider than it was. It is an unhappy state of affairs when we can only exchange views by quarrelling. Rome cannot compromise, and we who are her children clearly see

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that this does not spring from an obstinate temper, but from an unwavering confidence in the truth of her position. But these is a difference between principles and manners, and it should be a subject of a serious examination of conscience for some of us whether our manners are not more of an obstacle to understanding than our principles are. The weakness of Malines from the beginning was that it was Malines. Is it too much to hope that before long some semi-official conference may be constituted, where approaches may be attempted, with courage, patience, humility; even hope? This is not merely a matter of ecclesiastical politics, but of the theological virtues.

SACRAMENTAL EXPERIENCE. To support the validity of their orders, their communions, their confessions, Anglo-Catholics appeal to empirical verification which comes from their use. It is easy to dismiss this as a mere matter of emotion. But there is a more generous explanation, although it is not likely to prove altogether acceptable. It is true that sanctifying grace, of which sacramental grace is a determination, lies deeper than the conscious levels of the mind and that, apart from a special privilege, it is only experienced, as St. Thomas says, *conjecturaliter per aliqua signa*. The emotion concomitant to a strong act of charity may be very grey and, as all students of mystical literature know, a feeling of dereliction is compatible with sanctity. Still, some overflow into the lower reason and emotions is not abnormal, particularly when it is associated with an outward sign. This is one of the secondary purposes of the sacraments, to stir human devotion. Thus when an Anglo-Catholic devoutly makes use of his sacraments, some sort of 'sacramental experience' is not to be unexpected. He has not received a valid sacrament (except for Matrimony), but his sanctifying grace has been aroused, and given a certain tone. There are elements in the situation which make his perception far from being only hallucination. No ordinary empirical tests exist by which a consecrated host may be discerned from an unconsecrated one, and a practical psychologist may discover no difference between the reception of a valid and of an invalid sacrament. The difference lies in the presence or absence of an external and authoritative guarantee. And so the devout reception of

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an invalid sacrament may well be considered to act somewhat after the manner of a sacramental, or better, to produce grace *ex opere operantis*. We see real holiness in many lives influenced by the Oxford Movement, and the theory sketched above at least does something to explain a sacramental quality which makes it so different from the holiness of the Evangelical or the Moslem.

NOT AT HOME. If we can judge from the *Church Times*, Anglo-Catholics are less preoccupied with the thought of Rome than they were. References are less frequent, though they are usually correct and pleasant. This makes the tone of two recent ones all the more to be regretted. A domestic incident of a Catholic undergraduate refused communion occasioned the reflection that there are worse places for a Catholic than the Church of England. As people in glass houses, our manner will not be considered mighty, when we ask the *Church Times* not to depart from its own standards, and hinge its arguments on personalities.

OTHER FISH TO FRY. The second reference was less trivial. A leading article recognised the fact that the great new Catholic Cathedral at Liverpool was not conceived in a spirit of ecclesiastical competitiveness, but then went on to deplore the setting of altar against altar. It suggested that Rome, having lost Spain, and finding itself cramped in Italy, threatened in Central Europe and blocked by the rulers of America, now turns to England as 'the strategic line of advance . . . for the Vatican policy of religious exclusiveness.' This little improvisation in world politics may be neglected, but when we are told that this is the spirit behind the sacrifices we make, the new missions we open, the schools and the religious houses, our sense of humour begins to be tasked. The *Church Times* apparently thinks that the Church 'does not aim immediately at converting the atheist, the immoral, or the agnostic to the Christian faith. Its efforts are rather directed towards perverting Christians of other obediences to the authority of the Roman See.' This at a time when we feel that we are fighting alone as an organised body to preserve and extend the elements of Christian morality and to affirm the definite truth of the Incarnation! The dedication of a whole

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number of this magazine to the Oxford Movement, or the frequent sallies of the Catholic Press on the subject are not fair indications, for, as a matter of fact, the Church of England is very far from occupying the foreground of Catholic interest and action. Only one Catholic society springs to the mind as happening to be chiefly concerned with Anglicans, and that is not for making converts, but for feeding and clothing them.

CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN FACT. The old debate between us ranged round Scripture and Tradition. But the Movement has developed away from the old Tractarian interests. To the new school the Fathers seem more of a hindrance than a help. St. Augustine is given a bad press. Naturally we regard the Fathers with confidence as Roman Catholics, even the 'Papalism' of some of them has grown more apparent. At the same time, the fact is not worth insisting in so much as it was two or three decades ago. One effect of the spread of popular science has been to diminish respect for the past, and early Church history appears curiously remote in the modern conflict. The living Church is sure of its present strength, and can fight without a backward glance. Peter speaks in Pius. It is important to note that this reliance of Catholicism on itself precisely as existing in the ever-present is quite different from the Anglo-Catholic appeal to experience. For it is not based only on pragmatism, but principally on a certitude of the speculative mind. It is the strength of an organism which satisfies the metaphysical mind as well as the historical and poetical, and which draws its life, initially intellectual, from outside the time-series. Some think therefore with reason that the Catholic apostolate is now for the thinker rather than the scholar (if the opposition may be tolerated for the moment), and that our approach to the newest Anglo-Catholics must be rather through the philosophy of St. Thomas than through the witness of the Fathers.

JACOBIN.