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English Catholicism and the See of Rome
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Since the beginning of this century the Catholic movement within the English Church has forced itself more and more upon public notice. It is not unnatural, therefore, that the ordinary layman should wonder what connection this movement has with Roman Catholicism. Few remain, it is true, who seriously believe that Anglo-Catholic priests are 'Jesuits in disguise,' or that the whole movement is one of the dark and subtle machinations of Rome, put into motion with the object of bringing thousands into complete submission. But still the layman sees that many of the doctrines and practices of Anglo-Catholicism are apparently identical with, or at least closely similar to, those of Romanism.

He knows perhaps that Mass is offered daily in his parish church, with the full Catholic ceremonial. The queue near the confessional before the great feasts interests and surprises him; and from the pulpit he hears resort to this sacrament advocated in all cases of serious sin. It may be that he finds in his parish church all the warmth of Catholic devotion which he has seen on the Continent, worship paid to our Lord present in the Holy Sacrament reserved, and direct invocation of Mary and the Saints ; and he is puzzled, because he has connected all this only with Roman Catholicism. Apart from the right or wrong of the matter, it may well seem to him unnecessary that another body should exist, not in communion with Rome, and yet in many ways so nearly resembling her. It is to such laymen as these that this paper is primarily addressed.

Now if Anglo-Catholics are to justify their existence, they will do well to show that their scheme of religion embodies that which is best in the Roman Catholic scheme, and that it has some distinctive contribution to offer in addition. Let us consider then whether this is the case. And for this purpose it is necessary briefly to go to history.

Church of England Catholic

If we look back upon the history of the Catholic Church, we find that for the first thousand years of its life there existed a great and ever growing

block of Christians, who constituted what was known as the 'Great Church,' and there was no doubt as to who were members of this Church and who were not. Our Lord had founded the Church as the depository or 'storehouse,' as it were, of truth and of power; and he promised that the Holy Spirit would lead the Church into truth. (St. John xvi. 13.) The voice of the Holy Spirit was recognised as speaking by means of the authoritative pronouncements of the 'Great Church' ; that is to say, through such definitions of the General Councils of bishops as commended themselves to the experience of the faithful.

Now in 1054, for reasons more political than doctrinal, owing in fact principally to the rivalry which existed between Rome and Constantinople, this ' Great Church' divided into two almost equal parts; external union ceased between the adherents of Rome and the adherents of Constantinople. Then for the first time in history a serious question arose as to where the true Church was to be found. Each part of the Church claimed to constitute the whole Church, and that exclusive claim is made to this day, on behalf both of the Church of Rome and of the Orthodox Eastern Church. The matter would be simplified for us if one or other part of the Church had departed from the true faith; but as a matter of fact both adhered uncompromisingly to the whole faith as laid down in the undivided Church. Anglo-Catholics maintain that, this being so, the most probable view is that neither exclusive claim is justified, but that the two parts (externally divided as they were) together made up the true Church. If that is so, it follows that external disunion, or division in outward organisation, is possible within the limits of the Catholic Church.

We turn next then, very briefly, to events in England in the sixteenth century. Up till that time the English Church had been in full communion with the pope. If we could put ourselves in the position of those who were living in that century, we should see clearly what a real need there was for some kind of a 'Reformation' within the Church. Doctrines and practices true and valuable in themselves were crudely and mechanically conceived. The memorial of Christ's death in the Mass was expressed as if it were a real death, and mathematical calculations were rife as to the exact efficacy of numbers of Masses. The sale of Indulgences regarded as magically effective apart from morality, had been for several centuries the occupation of a professional class. Meanwhile among the vast majority of those who called themselves Christians, the spiritual life was almost forgotten; essentials were in the background; Confession and Communion happened only at Easter. The nation was also grossly oppressed by papal taxation.

A reformation, then, was urgently needed; but it is deplorable that this did not happen without involving a further division in the Christian Church. It was again for political reasons that the division occurred; the final break took place in 1570, when Pope Pius V excommunicated Queen Elizabeth.

From that date the Church of England has been out of communion with the see of Rome; and again we have to decide where the true Church is to be found. Is the pope's claim justified, that because he excommunicated the English Church, she can no longer claim to be a true and vital part of the body of Christ?

In order to answer this question we must apply the same test that we applied in the case of the earlier division. If it is true that neither exclusive claim was justified in 1054, but that East and West together made up the true Church, then no new principle is involved in admitting the possibility of another external division. We are not concerned to defend either the private lives or the private opinions of some of the reformers; it must be obvious to any student of history that no Christian denomination is in a position to criticize another in such respects. We may frankly admit that reforming zeal was often allowed to go to regrettable lengths, and that many influential people within the Church held unorthodox opinions. We have referred above to some of the abuses which were rife, and violent reaction was not unnatural. But the whole point is this: did the Church of England repudiate any part of the faith of the undivided Church? Or did she definitely and unequivocally retain the essentials of Catholicism, those fundamentals which historians show us were the distinguishing features of the 'Great Church' before the first great schism?

We may answer this question in the words of Dr Gore (*Catholicism and Roman Catholicism*, p. 44). 'There seems to have been a special providence in the form which the Reformation and the repudiation of the Roman authority took in England. Here the appeal to Scripture ... was joined with a conservative retention of the three great elements of Catholic unity; the Catholic creeds, the sacramental system, and the apostolic succession of the ministry.' If we read the Prayer Book and other such documents, we find that the Church of England unquestionably claims continuity with the Church of the ages, and though we miss much which we desire to restore of the warmth and beauty of Catholic devotion, we find that our communion has been providentially preserved from being officially committed to heresy. The contrast in this respect between the Church of England and other reformed bodies is significant. We realise that the full practice of Catholicism was largely dormant for three centuries, but even during those dark days Catholicism - though in an attenuated form - continued to be practised by a 'faithful remnant,' which was at some periods more numerous than at others.

Ninety years ago a great movement started in Oxford, the object of which was not to introduce innovations in doctrine or practice, but to restore the true character of the English Church. The success of this movement must surely be beyond the most sanguine expectations of its originators. Such success is hard to explain unless the movement is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

At the heart of the movement is no mere question of externals-of candles and vestments and incense, as some suppose. It has effected a real and vital religious revival in this country; even the parishes least sympathetic towards it have been greatly affected by it; few churches now remain, for instance, in which Holy Communion is not celebrated at least on Sundays and great feasts. But this point need not be laboured, because an elementary knowledge of history reveals the contrast between the state of the English Church to-day and its state ninety years ago. The Church is still accused, it is true, of 'failing,' of not being in touch with the 'modern mind'; but few would be bold enough to assert that it fulfilled that function more adequately at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The success of the Catholic Revival is such that, though its duration has been comparatively so short, probably one third of the clergymen in Britain to-day are in sympathy with it: and Catholics are recognised even by the secular press as forming one of the strongest and most 'alive' sections in the Church.

Reasons for Independence

The foregoing historical sketch may have helped towards and understanding of the present position of the Church of England. We go on to inquire what definite advantage there is for those who desire to live the Catholic life, in belonging to this body, rather than in making their individual submissions to the pope.

In the first place, it is clear that Anglicans are in a strong position with regard to the all important problem of reunion. The fact that she has retained the Catholic essentials, and at the same time makes no exclusive claim to constitute the whole Church, has caused many to look to the Church of England as a hopeful medium in the process of reuniting Christendom.

It is true that in 1896 the Roman Catholic Church officially repudiated our Orders, chiefly on the ground that, at the Reformation, the intention of the Church of England ceased to be to ordain priests in the Catholic sense of that word. Mr. Wilfrid Knox has dealt with this charge at length in his book *Friend, I do thee no Wrong*. We may quote briefly from his summing up: 'The charge made in the Bull of Leo XIII that the changes introduced into the Anglican Ordinal at the Reformation are such that ... they reveal an intention to abolish the chief function of the priesthood ... is entirely contrary to the received Catholic theology, which holds that provided the necessary Form and Matter are employed, with the serious intention of doing what the true Church does or what Christ instituted, the sacrament is valid.' This conclusion is borne out by the greatest Roman Catholic historian of this century. Monseigneur Duchesne, who died last year. The weak position of those who attack the validity of Anglican Orders is indicated by the number and variety of reasons which critics find for their

invalidity, and the frequency with which a former argument has to be discarded.

A second point is that the signs of the times seem to be pointing clearly to the desirability of some form of non-papal Catholicism. People are beginning to see that the papacy, as at present constituted, is the result of a one-sided development spreading over many centuries. As far back as 130?, Pope Boniface VIII promulgated a Bull in which these words occur : ' We declare, affirm, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.' But the culmination of this, as we believe, false development did not come until 1870, when at the Vatican Council, it was affirmed that 'the definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves and not by consent of the Church.'

It is relevant here to relate one of the results of this pronouncement. Fifty thousand orthodox and loyal Catholics in Germany felt quite unable to bear this new burden which was being imposed upon them ; they refused to accept this decree and were consequently excommunicated. The result was the existence of another body exactly analogous to the Church of England, holding the orthodox faith, but out of communion with the Holy See. This body of Catholics is known as Old Catholic. A similar incident has recently happened in Czecho-Slovakia, where half a million Catholics have ceased from communion with the pope. These instances (which could easily be multiplied) serve to illustrate the tendency in Europe towards a non-papal Catholicism.

The course of this one-sided development in the Roman Church is ably followed out by Mr. N. P. Williams in his book *Our Case as against Rome*. He shows, beginning from New Testament times, that a primacy may legitimately be claimed for the bishop of Rome, but that this is a very different thing from a sovereignty : for the latter claim he finds no authority either in Scripture or in the Fathers.

Thirdly, it appears to us to be of the very first importance that the Catholic Church should welcome, and as occasion arises, recognise in her teaching, all the assured results of science, philosophy, and historical criticism: and this we believe that the Roman Catholic Church signally fails to do. In the opinion of many this is the very strongest count against her. Perhaps the state of affairs may succinctly be indicated in this way. The true Catholic view of ecclesiastical authority is that the Church defines a dogma because it is true. The Roman view is that a dogma is true because the Church defines it. The distinction is a subtle, but a true one.

To give one instance, in 1893 Pope Leo XIII issued his Encyclical on 'The Study of Holy Scripture,' in which the following passage occurs: 'All the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost.'

The whole Bible, that is to say, was positively dictated word for word by God, and is infallibly true in every kind of detail. Later papal utterances have confirmed this view. The I Catholic Bible Congress' held in Cambridge in 1921 issued a report (The Religion of the Scriptures, ed. C. Lattey, S.J.) containing similar statements, though some even among Roman Catholic theologians modify the face value of this view in actual practice. In addition to all this, the Roman Catholic Church continues officially to include in its Missal and Breviary reference to such stories as that of the Holy House, which is alleged to have been miraculously transported from Nazareth to Loreto in Italy, where to this day the shrine is thronged with worshippers. This whole matter is of urgent importance, and is doing much to set the great representatives of science against Christianity.

Fourthly, there is the question of the pope's claim to earthly sovereignty, which is closely bound up with the whole Roman Catholic system. To instance two points, the pope claims the right of kingship over the Papal States, which now form a part of the kingdom of Italy; and also the authority, as Vicar of Christ, to depose princes at his will. There are many Englishmen who realise the wonderful power of the Catholic religion as a spiritual and moral force, but are strongly averse from identifying themselves with these claims. This naturally forms for them an additional reason for remaining in the Church of England, where Catholicism may be practised untrammelled by claims to earthly sovereignty.

Hopes for the Future

Finally, we must briefly refer to our hopes for the future. I believe that the greatest hope for this generation lies in the reunion of non-papal Catholics throughout the world. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that this is already in sight. When that is an accomplished fact, we shall be in a far stronger position to treat with the great patriarch of western Europe; and we hope and pray that ultimate reunion will be reached on the basis of a constitutional papacy. All Catholics would gladly recognise the bishop of Rome as the Primate of Christendom, if only some day he could modify his claim to infallibility apart from the consent of the Church. In such a united Catholic Church we should hope for great variety still in non-essentials. The august and time-honoured ceremonies of the Latin rite might well continue to be performed, for instance, in Westminster Cathedral for the benefit of those who preferred them, while those who had learnt to love the vernacular liturgy would be free to hear it in St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. Meanwhile the greatest service which every Catholic can do to the cause of reunion and of truth, is to exercise the virtues of patience and charity, realising that the Church which is itself infallible, must always be made up on earth of fallible individuals; and that to whichever communion we give our allegiance, there are bound to be unworthy members of it. And the earnest prayer of every Catholic

should be for the coming of that great and glorious day when our Lord's desire will be completely realised, 'That they all may be one.'