

AUTHORITY AND THE ANGLICAN MIND<sup>1</sup>

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THE purpose and scope of this paper may be conveniently formulated in the following two questions: what are the obstacles which prevent our fellow countrymen, who are Christian believers, and men and women of good will, from recognizing the Catholic Church for what it is, the visible society in the world, which alone is Christ's Mystical Body and which alone speaks his word with the fullness of his authority; and, how far are these obstacles in the minds of the non-Catholics in question, and how far are they to be looked for in our presentation to them of the Gospel?

You will observe that I am prescinding altogether from any discussion of the mystery of the bestowal or non-bestowal of the gift of faith, which, however else we differ about it, we all agree to be a sheerly gratuitous gift of God, given by him when and to whom he wills. I am treating faith, in the context of this discussion, as divine faith in the authority of the Catholic and Roman Church, which seems to me to be very often an extension of faith in those who already possess it on a narrower, but at the same time very real, field. I am proposing to deal only with obstacles in the mind, obstacles, that is, in the non-Catholic mind which, we must presume, make it incapable of having this gift of faith bestowed; or obstacles in our own minds, which lead to the presentation by us of that faith in a form which is in fact incapable, psychologically speaking, of penetrating the non-Catholic receiving mind, and preparing it for the bestowal of the gift. To illustrate: if we were investigating the alarming leakage, let us say, from our Catholic primary schools, one important element, but only one element, in our enquiry would be the religious instruction class: how far is the presentation of religion to the children by the teacher to blame for its failure to become rooted in their souls (obstacles in the teacher's mind), and how far is the conditioning of bad environment responsible (obstacles in the children's minds)? So the field of discussion is narrowed down to the obstacles created by the mental attitude of non-

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Catholic believers towards us (and our presentation of the faith), and ours towards them.

By believers we mean all those who accept Jesus Christ as God and Saviour; and we should not forget that this may, with many, be a deeply felt experience founded upon a deeply apprehended truth, in spite of intellectual formulations of this truth, which by our standards are quite inadequate, if not materially heretical; in such cases attitude and actions often rise far superior to the warrant of conceptualized ideas. We can further narrow the field of discussion by cutting out from it all Christian believers who have never in fact made contact with the Catholic Church and its teaching, who only know of it through the gross misrepresentation of caricature, who think of us as worshipping the Virgin Mary as a goddess, or paying according to a fixed tariff for the absolution of our sins.

The Christian believers we envisage in this discussion are those, who are reasonably well educated, who are familiar with our teaching, if not at first hand at least through the writings of those who do not misrepresent us in any gross and obvious way, and quite possibly through personal contact with Catholics themselves. Forming a central and dominant core within this larger group is a smaller and less extensive one, consisting of clergy, ministers and educated laity, of whom there are a growing number, who have made real and often largely successful efforts to gain a proper intellectual apprehension of the Catholic position; they have read and pondered over Catholic theological, ascetical or mystical writings, and are well versed at least in the main outlines of Church history. Yet they remain, many of them, so far as we can see quite untouched by any kind of call to become Catholics.

It is men and women such as these—they are to be found in the Church of England and in the Free Churches—who maintain and pass on to others, as they have received it from their predecessors, a mentality, an outlook and attitude in regard to the fundamental question of spiritual authority, which may fairly be described as the typical English religious mentality. It is a mentality that can be and often is retained, at least in its unconscious influence, when religious practice and even religious belief of any kind have long ago disappeared. This English religious mentality may not unjustly be called the Anglican mentality,

because it derives from, and has been passed on to the English nation by, that unique institution that has done so much during the past four hundred years to mould and shape the character and ethos of the nation; the Church of England. For the Church of England has exercised and still exercises a dominant influence on the English religious outlook, not only in itself but through the various Protestant non-conformist bodies that have gone out from it, yet are still deeply coloured in the character of their Protestantism by it. I hope I may be pardoned for venturing to outline the background of historical causes against which this Anglican mentality has arisen and been fostered; a mentality still characteristic of the nation as a whole in regard to the notion of religious authority, even though the majority are now far from being Anglican by religion. What I shall say will be a generalization, without the many qualifications in particular cases, which are operative even in generalizations held to be broadly true.

I have said that the Church of England is a unique institution among the religious communions that issued from the Reformation. Its architect was Queen Elizabeth, or at least Queen Elizabeth and her ministers, and the key date is 1559, the passing of the Act of Uniformity of that year, which effected the Elizabethan settlement. Up to then, from the passing of the Act of Supremacy under Henry VIII, a period of a quarter of a century, England had undergone a series of rapid and bewildering changes in religion. Under Henry VIII Catholicism without the Pope; Mass, the sacraments, confession and the ordinary course of Catholic life continuing as before, apart from the destruction of the religious orders. On Henry VIII's death, the introduction of Protestantism, modified and partially disguised at first, and later in 1552 in a much more full-blooded form; the altars thrown down and the Mass proscribed. Under Mary in 1553, the restoration of Catholic life, Mass and sacraments, and finally, not without difficulty, the reconciliation of the Church of England with the Holy See, and the restoration of true Catholic authority.

The point to note of course is the radical principle underlying these changes. From Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy to Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity, what a man believed was no longer settled by the teaching authority of the universal Church with the Papacy at its head, but by the authority of the King's or Queen's Highness, who was supreme both in things spiritual and temporal

throughout the realm. Even the restoration under Mary was carried out by the Sovereign in Parliament, and it was the Mass and the sacramental life of the Church which were first restored, the authority of the Papacy last. Thus the changes of religion which took place in the years between 1534 and 1559, whether Protestant or Catholic, were initiated and carried out by the Crown in Parliament; so that by the time Elizabeth came to the throne, the younger generation had all been born and grown up under a system, in which it might well be taken for granted that, whatever the religion of the country was to be, the question lay in the hands of Crown and Parliament to decide. On the accession of Elizabeth came what proved to be the final settlement of religion, little though it could have been foreseen as such at the time. Under this settlement England has since lived uninterruptedly, if we except the Commonwealth interlude. It was this settlement that fixed and crystallized the Anglican mentality in religious matters.

Historians are still at odds about Elizabeth's religion, and she remains something of an enigma. But I do not think there can be any doubt that, whatever its exact nature, it was entirely dominated by her sense of vocation as Queen of England; that in her eyes whatever was politically advantageous for the English nation was in fact the will of God. And in this did she differ so very widely from her great contemporaries, both Catholic and Protestant? Readers of Aldous Huxley's *Grey Eminence* will remember that Richelieu's Franciscan adviser, a man of apparently deeply spiritual life, came to see God's will wholly in terms of Richelieu's policy for France. When the young Elizabeth came to the throne she was faced by the alternatives of Catholicism (and the danger of Spanish domination), or a free independent England, in the growth of which the rising national spirit could find expression. Possibly her own personal preference would have been for a return to the Church of England of her father's last years; an independent national Church, maintaining the day-to-day constituents of Catholic life; Mass and the sacraments, much as the ideals of a later Gallicanism conceived of the French Church. But policy and the rising tide of Protestantism dictated a return to the régime of Edward VI and the Book of Common Prayer, with sufficient alterations to include the greatest possible part of the nation in a single national Church, in such a way

that nation and Church would be as nearly as might be two aspects of the same entity, reflecting and fostering the spirit of the nation.

Many of Elizabeth's bishops, and many too of her clergy and people, were no doubt to a greater or lesser extent imbued with Protestant and indeed fiercely Puritan ideas. But there were many also, especially amongst parochial clergy and laity, who were quiet, inoffensive and bewildered holders of benefices or regular frequenters of the parish church, who had continued so through all the changes of the four reigns. These formed the central core of the new Church of England, a Church which was effectively national, in which the widest variety of belief was tolerated, provided a measure of conformity was maintained. Many of these men and women, including many of the clergy, remained in sympathy with the Catholic way of life and the beliefs on which it is based; they used the new services and formularies imposed by Parliament, fitting in their Catholic beliefs to the sacramental life of the Book of Common Prayer as best they could, gradually assimilating themselves to what they found there and becoming more and more Anglican in their outlook as time went on. What had been looked upon perhaps as an interim policy, a patient waiting for another change, this time for the better, became by degrees a settled and habitual way of life. Thus the tradition of what later came to be called Anglo-Catholicism took root.

During the middle years of Elizabeth's reign a sharp struggle took place between the Crown and the extreme Protestants. These latter wanted the Church of England to be organized on the lines of Calvin's Geneva; and episcopacy (called by them prelacy) together with the liturgical worship of the Book of Common Prayer to be cast out. But Elizabeth was adamant, and by the end of the reign the Church of England under her guidance, and with the help of able bishops, Whitgift and Bancroft, had settled down into the permanent form that Anglicanism has since assumed; a national Church, identifying itself with the nation and the nation's spirit. A Church which demands and receives loyalty as an institution, and whose requirements in matters of belief are not exigent. Within it are, and have been since the beginning, two extremes; Anglo-Catholicism on the right and Puritanism or Evangelicalism, as it came to be called later, on the left, and occupying the centre, what may be called

central Anglicanism, comprising still the great majority of Anglicans; sober and undemanding in doctrinal standards; all these bound together into a unity by regular participation in the worship of the Anglican liturgy in the ancient parish church.

The nineteenth century brought great changes into English life, and to the Anglican Church. The industrial revolution, beginning at a time when the Church of England was in its most sleepily conservative state, changed the face of once rural England and brought in its train a large loss, in great cities, and later in the villages, of adherents to institutional religion, so that practising Anglicans, Free Churchmen and Catholics are roughly equal in numbers, comprising some six to eight millions between them, out of a total population of between forty and fifty millions.<sup>2</sup> But the nineteenth century brought also a tremendous revival in the vitality of Anglicanism, first through Evangelicalism, which derived its impetus, at least in part, from the earlier Wesleyan movement, and later through the Tractarians. Tractarianism introduced a widespread deepening of the sacramental life, and this affected not Anglo-Catholicism only but the whole of the Church of England; and with this revival in the sacramental idea came also a revival of missionary effort, so that the Church of England today comes near to the appearance of a world-wide Church. It still claims deep loyalty from its practising members, and has produced and still produces scholars, especially in biblical studies, and defenders of the basic doctrines of the creeds.

Such then, in brief outline, is the historical causality which has produced and maintains the Anglican mentality, and its far-reaching influence. The first thing we must recognize, if we are to deal successfully with this mentality, is the immense difference of presupposition, outlook and ethos that divides us, but which quite often, in our actual dealings with non-Catholics, we entirely fail to recognize in practice. We tend unconsciously to assume that they will regard authority for religious truth, *mutatis mutandis*, much in the same way as we do; when in fact its impact on them is something radically different from the impact of Catholic authority upon us. For us the Church is a living, visible, structural organism, a society that is undivided and indivisible like a biological organism; into this organic society we are incorporated by baptism, we become an integral part of it, it touches our lives

<sup>2</sup> The figures are not meant for more than a rough approximation.

immediately at every point, giving us the faith by which we live, mediating to us through the Mass the sacrifice by which we are redeemed, and communicating to us the saving grace which flows from that sacrifice, uniting us to Christ, and to each other in Christ, in the communion and fellowship which is the common life of the Mystical Body.

Until the Reformation this conception of the Church, deriving directly from the New Testament, was universal; the Church was never thought of as divided or divisible. From St Ignatius, through St Cyprian to St Augustine, schism was always from the Church, never within it. And today we share this view with the historic tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy. But at the Reformation Western Christendom was divided by multiple schisms, and by this fact the view was forced upon the Reformers that the Church, in its external structure, must be both divisible and actually divided. From the first this constituted for Anglicans, who were attracted to the Catholic and sacramental way of life, a fundamental problem. They could no longer appeal, as the Catholic Church had always appealed, to the living voice of an organic society, here and now teaching them the truth, because a divided Church, since it ceases to be an organic society, ceases as such to have a single living voice. They were unwilling to appeal, as Protestantism did, to the Scriptures, interpreted by the individual, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with a tradition dominated by the special insights of the great Reformers, Luther and Calvin. They had to fall back therefore upon an appeal to the undivided Church, as Newman did in his lectures on the *Prophetic Office of the Church*, which represented and developed a typical High Anglican tradition. Inevitably, as Newman was, the Anglican is sooner or later brought face to face with the problem: when a schism does take place, where does the ultimate authority lie for the decision whether the schism is within the Church or from the Church? And once the Church is itself divided, upon the supposition that it can be so, it necessarily loses the power to bear witness to the nature of the unity which Christ wills for his Church; for a divided Church cannot do other than speak, on this subject at least, with divided and contradictory voices.

Anglicans then, and especially those who tend to sympathy with historic Christendom as against the continental Reformers,



and Anglo-Catholics are the leaders in this attitude, are faced by the alternatives: either the Church of Christ is a single, visible and undivided society; or, being divided, is without a living authoritative voice. The choice of the latter alternative, which is inevitable for Anglicans unless they are Papalists, involves falling back for a decisive judgment in matters of faith upon the verdict of the undivided Church. The verdict of the undivided Church, according to the Anglican tradition, is discoverable by the threefold resort to Scripture, tradition and sound learning. This threefold resort was put forward by the Archbishop of York, in a recent broadcast discussion during the Unity Octave, as the key to the Anglican position and the explanation of its view of the Church's authority. It may be found set out at length in the Bampton Lectures of 1954 by Professor H. E. W. Turner.<sup>3</sup> But on analysis it turns out that in fact, in this view of the Church's teaching authority, the final decision as to the truth of any doctrine, the final and decisive verdict, can only be that of sound learning to which both Scripture and tradition in this view are necessarily subject.

Unless therefore a Papalist position is adopted, as it is by some, there can be for Anglicans no infallible teaching authority which can give its divinely safeguarded decision, when the sound learning of theologians and scientific historians has done its proper work. It is not surprising therefore to find that Anglo-Catholicism as a whole has discarded the very notion of infallible authority, and that in the official Report, *Catholicity*, drawn up by Anglo-Catholic theologians,<sup>4</sup> the concept is hardly mentioned except in connection with Rome. Mr E. C. Rich, in the book he wrote while on his way into the Catholic Church, says that 'he approached his enquiry with the assumption that there was no infallible endowment in the Christian religion. . . . But in the course of the enquiry, it became gradually clear to his mind that such an attitude was, in fact, a denial and rejection of the whole claim to be the revelation of the Way, the Truth and the Life.'<sup>5</sup> That conclusion was a decisive step, which marked the beginning

3 *The Pattern of Christian Truth*; Bampton Lectures, 1954, by H. E. W. Turner, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity in the University of Durham. Chapter IV. (Mowbrays, 1954.)

4 *Catholicity*—A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West, being a Report presented to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury; Dacre Press, 1947.

5 *Spiritual Authority in the Church of England*. An enquiry by Edward Charles Rich, Canon Emeritus of Peterborough, sometime Chancellor and Cathedral Librarian, Longmans, 1953, p. 210.



of the transformation of his mind from the Anglican to the Catholic outlook.

As a result, then, of its inevitable adhesion to the notion of a divisible and actually divided Church, Anglicanism stands unequivocally on the Protestant side, as against Rome and the East, in the matter of Catholic authority. However Catholic an individual Anglican may be in belief, however Catholic the beliefs of the group he belongs to, the organic body in which he is incorporated is not the Catholic Church itself, but, in his view, a part of it only, and none of the parts of which the Catholic Church, thus understood, consists, gives the same account of the nature and function of the Church as a whole, as Christ willed it to be. The Anglican then does not get his faith, as a whole, from the Church of England. If he wishes to know the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, or whether the Eucharist is a true sacrifice; if he desires to invoke the Saints or to honour and love our Lady as God's Mother; if he is doubtful as to whether episcopacy is of the *esse* or only of the *bene esse* of the Church, it is not to the Church of England or its formularies he must go. He must appeal, not to a living organic society within which he lives, speaking with a living voice; but to an abstraction—the witness of antiquity, the first six centuries of Christianity, the common witness of East and West, or even, as with the Papalists, to the voice of the Roman Church, listened to in abstraction from its unity and communion. But none of these abstractions, save the last, can give any united answer to the vital question: what is the nature, constitution and authority of the Church Christ founded? And if to that question the Papalist accepts the answer of Rome, he can only remain in the Church of England by an act of disobedience to the voice upon which, as he professes, all his beliefs depend. The fact that many do so, and do so one believes in good faith, is evidence that Anglicans, by the very fact of being Anglicans, develop a mentality which puts obstacles in the way of seeing the Church as it is, and leaves them with a very defective conception of it; not regarding it as a divine, organic visible society, which contains the wholeness of the Christ-life, in which it is necessary to dwell in order to share in that life in communion and fellowship with the totality of its members, but rather as an abstract entity consisting of a number of communities, separated from communion with each other, all

possessing or possessing potentially certain gifts with which Christ intended his Church to be endowed; so that the way, the truth and the life which is Christ is not to be found wholly and entirely in a single organic society and its life, but only in this abstract entity, constituted by a number of separated, diverse and partially incomplete organic societies, each of which possesses a share of these gifts.

This Anglican mentality, which thus puts obstacles in the way of a true view of the Church, originates in an intense loyalty to the Church of England as an institution, which is so intimately associated in the Anglican mind with the national life, that whatever their individual beliefs are, these beliefs must somehow be integrated into the life of the Church of England. Only this can explain how a sincere and intelligent person, and one knows quite a number of them, can hold *ex animo* the Catholic teaching on the supremacy of the Holy See, as set out by the Vatican Council, and yet remain in the Church of England; it explains equally how men holding beliefs such as those of the late Bishop Barnes can also do so. It is the key also to the attitude of almost the whole Anglo-Catholic party to the Church of South India scheme. This scheme was first of all strongly opposed by the majority of Anglo-Catholics as contrary to Catholic order. Subsequently, however, when it became clear that the results of the scheme would in the long run be officially accepted by the Convocations, those who had opposed it, and in many cases doubted the validity of the Church of South India orders, changed their minds, decided upon their validity and accepted the still limited, but greatly extended, recognition of the Church of South India itself, which was proposed and passed in the Convocations. This action must, I believe, be seen as in no way subjectively dishonest; it was the normal working of the Anglican mentality, which sees whatever the Church of England does officially as somehow justifiable in the circumstances, and capable of being integrated into the Anglican scheme of things.

One of the modern manifestations of this mentality is that the whole system of Anglicanism has come to put a premium upon what may be called spiritual experience as the ultimate authority for religious truth, and the ultimate test of its validity. Put perhaps a little crudely, the argument runs thus: an Anglican says of his beliefs, they are found to be true in experience, therefore they

are authoritative; whereas the Catholic mind says: it is true because it is laid down by an authority ordained by God and thence it is assimilated into experience.<sup>6</sup> The history of Anglo-Catholicism in the nineteenth century witnesses to this characteristic of the Anglican religious mentality. The Oxford Movement was, in the main, a tremendous and sustained outburst of sacramentalism. This devout and intense belief in, and practice of, the sacramental life is characteristic today, not only of Anglo-Catholicism, though there it is most marked, but under its all-pervading influence, of Anglicanism as a whole. It is certainly a characteristic that Anglicanism is communicating to the other sections of the Church of South India.

So occupied has Anglo-Catholicism been in building this practice of sacramental life into the structure of the Church of England, that it has made relatively little effort of constructive thought in theological enquiry into the question of whether the foundations of that structure are sound. Where it has done so it has tended on the one side to Papalism, and on the other to an emphasis upon the authority of experience which brings it as a group, in fact, though not in appearance, very near to evangelical Pretestantism. We know that we receive grace from the sacraments, (so the almost unconscious argument runs) and therefore the constitution and theory of the Church of England is valid and so are its orders. This again throws light upon the fact that argument about the validity of Anglican orders is nearly always a waste of time, even when conducted on Catholic theological principles with Anglicans of learning and integrity. In this as in all our differences, the basic element is our respective presuppositions concerning the nature and authority of the Church. These presuppositions have formed our differing attitudes concerning the manner in which revealed truth is communicated to men, and, in consequence, there is between us a radical clash of opposed mentalities. The removal of this can only be a slow and costing process, demanding much patience and understanding effort on both sides.

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<sup>6</sup> *Vide* Professor H. E. W. Turner in *Theology*, May 1957: 'We (Anglicans) accept a doctrine as authoritative because it appears to be true; we do not believe it to be true simply because it comes to us on authority' (page 184).

The first half of this article has been devoted to an attempt to analyse the Anglican mentality, and to show how it is an obstacle to the conversion even of those, who in an itemized way, hold the same doctrines as Catholics. I believe it to be the greatest of all such obstacles. It engenders a subjective and intensely personal attitude towards religious truth, which affects even unbelievers. To say this is not to imply that there are no obstacles on our side, obstacles that arise from our own mentality and affect our presentation of the gospel to the non-Catholic mind. There are in fact quite a number, and it is to the consideration of some of them that we now turn. The principal obstacle, I feel sure, is our almost complete lack of religious contact with our separated brethren. The Fathers of the Missionary Society, in the Catholic Enquiry Centre, are making a planned campaign upon non-Catholics the basis of which is *contact*. First, through advertisement; next, in answer to advertisement, the leaflet scheme, introducing an outline of the Catholic position; and lastly, a follow-up designed to put those interested into personal touch with a priest. This, if I may say so, is a quite excellent scheme, likely to be very successful as its present results already foreshadow, and basically its success is due to personal contact.

I think myself that, in the main, it is a method that makes its appeal to three classes: to those quite uninstructed in any kind of Christian religion; to those who are semi-instructed; and to those who are well instructed in what I will call a catechetical sense; but it will have little immediate appeal to those, non-Catholic laity and clergy, who have some knowledge of theological and biblical problems. I mean nothing in any sense derogatory to the excellent outline leaflets sent out by the Enquiry Centre. I mean only that the difficulties these more highly theologically educated people have in regard to the Catholic religion lie at a deeper level than, of their very nature, these leaflets envisage or deal with. It is, to my mind, clergy and ministers and theologically educated laity with whom we need also to establish contact, and to establish it at a much deeper theological level than is provided for, even in advanced catechetical instruction.

We all realize that our own Catholic people, humanly speaking, are made and maintained in their religion by the pastoral care of the priests who come from our seminaries. Without claiming

that the clergy and ministers of the non-Catholic denominations exercise an influence over their people which is comparable with the influence of Catholic priests over theirs, I do maintain, nevertheless, that the influence of non-Catholic clergy and ministers is very considerable. The general lines of their thought about religious problems will be followed by their people, though generally at a lower level. Where they misunderstand, and in consequence mistrust, they will convey that mistrust to their people, even though the theological reasons for that mistrust have their origin in misconceptions at a deeper level than ordinary well instructed lay people can in fact grasp. On the other hand, if we could remove these real or imagined difficulties, at this deeper philosophical, theological and historical level, the change of attitude which would result would very soon penetrate from clergy, ministers and theologically educated laity to ordinary practising Christians, on a very wide scale. In consequence the ground would be prepared, by the removal of obstacles, and especially of obstacles rooted in the mentality and outlook, in which the seed of faith would have a chance of fructifying, and the true concept of Catholic authority of being accepted.

But before that can happen personal contact must be established on a wide scale, at university and theological college level. At present this contact is virtually non-existent, though there are signs that opportunities for it are beginning to be taken. Some priests are on friendly terms with their non-Catholic counterparts, there is plenty of good will and some co-operation on social problems. But as a rule all theological contact is studiously avoided. Other priests are content to pass their non-Catholic counterparts in the street with a more or less friendly greeting, and there it ends. There are others who will not go even so far as this. On both sides, we write books by the dozen; but relatively speaking very few non-Catholic ministers and clergy read Catholic theological books, and when they do how woefully they often misconstrue them. And how few Catholic priests ever read non-Catholic theological works. There is no contact between us because we speak different languages and think in different idioms. We have little knowledge of each others climate of thought.

From the days of Fr Matthew Ricci, S.J., in seventeenth-century China, missionaries have realized that if you want to convert the heathen you must speak their language, study their history

and culture, master their literature and in every other possible way get into their minds and think with them. Nowadays no missionary would dream of trying to convert the Chinese, the African or the Indian without doing this, at great labour and cost to himself. But in our approach to the non-Catholics among whom we live we do not think this necessary. To use Fr Drinkwater's simile in another connection, we are like a man trying to fill a row of milk bottles by throwing pails of milk over them; a little goes in, an immense amount is wasted. Here is to be found, on our side, the great obstacle to the spread of the faith to those who already love our Lord and are trying to serve him faithfully in their own way.

The Catholic Church is by its very nature an inveterate convert-maker; it has been so since the first Pentecost. But there is a distinction between immediate convert-making, where the ground is already prepared, and convert-making at much longer range by the preparation of the ground for the seed of faith in the Church's mission and authority. In the work of which I have been speaking we have to put aside, as it were, the thought of immediate convert-making in order to concentrate on the preparation of the ground, by a sympathetic contact which is primarily designed for elucidation, explanation and the understanding of each other. It is essentially two-way work, and can only be done by a kind of abstraction from the thought of making converts. But at the same time honesty demands that we should never attempt to hide or evade the fact that in the long run conversion to the Church is the only way to the attainment of Christian unity and must necessarily be our ultimate aim, in accordance with the way God wills it, which is frequently, in this as in other things, not at all the way we should expect. The Ecumenical Movement and the spirit it generates is opening up for us great opportunities for this kind of contact. Some may and do argue that it is better to ignore our separated brethren, who are already Christians, and concentrate our efforts upon the agnostics and unbelievers who are indifferent to religion of any sort. With this in view they hold that we ought to emphasize, not the similarities between different forms of Christianity, but the outstanding difference between the Catholic Church and every other Christian allegiance. But surely this is to forget that agnosticism, unbelief and indifference to religion are largely the result of the quarrels

and divisions of Christians. To the outsider the voice of the Church is drowned by a chorus of discordant and competing voices all claiming to speak in Christ's name and all saying different things. If there were a single, universal, united witness to Christ by a single united body of Christians living together in unity and fellowship within the communion of Christ's Mystical Body, how impressive to the unbeliever that universal witness would be.

By way of conclusion let me give one or two instances of the kind of misconceptions which exist, and exist in the minds of learned non-Catholics of whose good will and scholarly integrity there can, I think, be no doubt. I am conscious that I am addressing an audience containing many professional theologians. I throw out these instances, therefore, as mere illustrations of subjects far too wide to be in any way discussed in a paper such as this, but in the hope that they may be starting points, perhaps, for further research along the lines of an eirenicly based theology.

First then, a quotation from the Report *Catholicity* presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury by a group of Anglo-Catholic theologians, and already mentioned in the first half of this paper. Speaking of the scholastic system these theologians say: 'Reasoning upon the *data* of Revelation is to some extent a necessity of the adult mind; but the codification of a huge syllogistic structure of reasoning, not only upon revealed truth but upon other deductions from revealed truths, and their consequences, and the requirement of it all for orthodoxy, seems to end in the substitution of a human rationalism for the *pistis* of the New Testament, and in the obscuring of the grand central facts of Divine Redemption . . . it would be difficult to devise anything more likely to repulse the instructed Protestant at the outset'. Those words appear over the signatures of eminent Anglican theologians such as Archbishop Ramsey, Dr Austen Farrer, Dr Thornton of Mirfield, Fr A. G. Hebert of Kelham, the Bishop of Exeter and the present Bishop of Oxford. It does not take much imagination to realize the picture that exists in the minds of these scholars, and the misconceptions that arise from such a picture. We ourselves who are trained in the scholastic method and know both its usefulness and its limitations in elucidating the mysteries of faith, are not always completely satisfied with the way the theological manuals handle the question



of the relation between the *res revelata* and the propositional formulas and definitions in which, for safe keeping, the truths of revelation are embodied. These scholars are untrained in this method, and unused to its discipline, and their attempts to struggle with its modes of expression are hardly likely to be wholly successful. There are exceptions to this, but they are rare. There can, I think, be little doubt, and my own experience makes me sure, that those Anglican theologians, and many others like them, would gain immense enlightenment on this subject, as in many others, from round-table discussions with their Catholic counterparts, in which the Catholic position, at a theological level of this kind, could be explained and expounded in a mutually understood language.

Secondly, very closely related with the misconception I have just cited is what Fr Victor White has called the legend that St Thomas and Catholic theology in general is committed to the view that revelation consists exclusively of propositional truth-statements dropped as it were from heaven. The late Archbishop William Temple confidently asserted this to be orthodox thomist doctrine in his *Nature, Man and God*, and in 1944 he put the same idea forward in an address to the London Aquinas Society where he was answered on the spot by Fr Victor White and later in an article in *BLACKFRIARS*.<sup>7</sup> Yet this legend dies hard. One has seen it repeated by many writers, notably in Professor J. K. S. Reid's book *The Authority of Scripture*<sup>8</sup> where it is made one of the irreconcilable elements between Protestantism and Catholicism.

Thirdly, the Catholic doctrine of biblical inspiration and its corollary of inerrancy is constantly interpreted in a fundamentalist sense, and we are classed as near fundamentalists with the Protestant evangelicals who actually are such. It is implied that we are bound by our doctrines to refuse to accept the very principles, let alone any of the conclusions, of modern scientific criticism; or at least, to the extent that we attempt to accept them, we are driven to 'adopt devices' to prevent the collapse of iner-

7 Archbishop Temple's address was subsequently printed in *BLACKFRIARS* under the title 'Thomism and Modern Needs', together with a series of Reflections by Fr Victor White on the Archbishop's points, the last of which concerned the nature of Revelation. (*BLACKFRIARS*, March, 1944, pp. 92 and 111.) For St Thomas's conception of revelation see *God and the Unconscious*, by Victor White, O.P., Harvill Press, 1952, Chapter VII.

8 Methuen, 1957.

rancy. I have in mind such learned and responsible books as *The Authority of the Biblical Revelation* by H. Cunliffe Jones, *Fundamentalism and the Church of God* by A. G. Hebert, and Professor Reid's book already mentioned.<sup>9</sup>

Fourthly, non-Catholics very commonly believe that we do not take the Scriptures seriously, that we are not true to Biblical religion. This view, which stems from a Protestant doctrine of Scriptural supremacy deriving from Luther and Calvin, is complicated in their minds by a difficulty in discovering what Catholics really mean by Tradition. A recent sermon preached before the University of Oxford<sup>10</sup> interprets the Council of Trent as meaning by its decree that Scripture and Tradition are separate and independent sources of doctrine, Tradition handing down certain doctrines from Apostolic times in a separate stream, thus supplying the lacunae of Scripture. From this the preacher seems to deduce that 'the more recent dogmas pronounced by the Church of Rome' (presumably the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption) are not considered by us to be in any sense in Scripture, and he goes on to say that the Tridentine decree has now become useless because unwritten traditions handed down in unbroken succession have been abandoned since they provide no basis for such doctrines, and that these are now held to be traditional only because they are believed by the present consensus of the faithful! There is clearly room for considerable elucidation here.<sup>11</sup>

The four instances that have been cited are of course only a few of the points at which contact in theological discussion with Anglican and Free Church theologians would be fruitful in clearing away misconceptions. The nature of faith, the nature of grace; both of these in relation, not so much to the errors of

9 There was perhaps some excuse for this a year or two ago. There are now, however, several popular books in English which make the Catholic position clear, as *The Two-Edged Sword* by J. L. McKenzie, s.j. (Bruce Publishing Co.), *Path through Genesis* by Bruce Vawter (Sheed and Ward), *Unless Some Man Show Me* by Alexander Jones (Sheed and Ward). There is also *The Bible Atlas* by Grollenberg (Nelson) with useful letterpress and *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nelson). In French there is the invaluable *Bible de Jérusalem*, and in it in particular, on the point of inerrancy, the Introduction to and Commentary on *Genesis* by Père de Vaux. *Scripture*, the Quarterly Journal of the Catholic Biblical Association (Nelson), always contains valuable and up-to-date material.

10 *Bible and Tradition*. A sermon preached before the University of Oxford by C. F. Evans, Fellow and Chaplain of Corpus Christi College, *Theology*, December, 1957.

11 An article on this sermon and its implications for irenic theology will appear in the July-August issue of BLACKFRIARS.

the Reformers (or what we suppose those errors to have been), as to the positive truths the Reformers and their heirs were concerned to emphasize. A proper relating of the Pope's infallibility and supremacy to the nature of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body, and many other points where misconception and, in consequence, mistrust and suspicion now exist, forming obstacles to the acceptance of faith in the Catholic Church.

How these contacts are to be brought about is another question, which lies outside the scope of this paper. There remains however one further point, that of toleration. Hitherto in our history we have not tolerated the Church of England or the Free Churches, we have ignored them to the best of our ability. If we are to make contact with them in matters religious, we must recognize that they do exist, though we cannot recognize their authority. Recognition of their existence means recognizing them as Christians, baptized Christians, brethren, who are separated from us. And recognizing them as Christians means meeting them, in personal encounter, to discuss with them the most fundamental, vital and all-embracing element in our lives, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and how it is mediated to us men for our salvation. Such meetings can only take place, as we know, under sanction of the Church's authority. That sanction has been given by the highest authority, subject to wise precautions, and it has been placed in the hands of the bishops; yet not without considerable urgency that it should be implemented.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, may I add a last word, a private opinion of my own and a controversial one. We shall not greatly succeed in any meetings with non-Catholics for such purposes unless we are prepared to pray with them, and there again some encouragement has been given, also by the highest authority.<sup>13</sup> Such prayer is allowed subject to the avoidance of all *communicatio in sacris*. Non-Catholics generally understand and appreciate the strength and propriety of our being adamant about this. They meet the same attitude among the Eastern Orthodox and the stricter Anglicans. They do not understand, and it cannot in my experience be explained to them in a way that produces conviction,

<sup>12</sup> See *Instruction to Local Ordinaries on the Ecumenical Movement*, issued by the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office (*Ecclesia Catholica*), December 20th, 1949. *Documents on Christian Unity*, Fourth series, 1948-57, O.U.P., 1958.

<sup>13</sup> See *Instruction (op. cit.)*, para 5, p. 26. In the words of Bishop G. K. A. Bell in the Introduction, p. xv: 'Perhaps this is the most obvious advance'.

why, in situations which do not involve even the danger of *communicatio in sacris*, we still, here in England at least, refuse to pray with them. In consequence they tend to think that our profession to regard them as brethren, though separated, is a hollow and meaningless formality. But perhaps we ourselves need to work out more positively what in fact constitutes *communicatio in sacris*. The whole situation is under the direction of the diocesan bishops, and we are bound to loyal obedience to whatever they direct. But that does not mean that we are not free to apply our intelligence to working out how we could, in fact, pray more often and less grudgingly with our separated brethren on certain occasions, securing their understanding that this in no way derogates from the uniqueness of the Catholic position or involves the attribution of any status to the Churches to which they give their allegiance.

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### NOTICE

The next issue of BLACKFRIARS will be a double number for July and August, and will contain articles by Père R. Voillaume on 'Père de Foucauld and his Fraternities', by Mgr H. Francis Davis on 'Is Newman's Theory of Development Catholic' and by Henry St John, O.P., on 'Bible and Tradition'.