

TWO BOOKS ON REUNION¹

THE coming Centenary of the Oxford Movement has revealed a deep cleavage between two sections of the Anglo-Catholic party. A realisation of the existence and extent of this cleavage makes it plain that the two sections as they crystallise and gain clearer definition will find themselves heading in opposite directions—the one for Rome, the other for Pan-Protestantism. This cleavage between the two sections lies in their respective views of the nature and authority of the Church of Christ. The section which lately made itself heard in the Manifesto of the Fifty stands by the traditional Anglo-Catholic doctrine of the nature and authority of the Church; a society (temporarily divided it is true) but essentially one and endowed with what has been nicknamed 'oracular' infallibility. The section of the party whose views find expression in *Essays: Catholic and Critical* has abandoned these traditional views and has evolved a new theory of the nature and authority of the Church, which is said to be consonant with New Testament teaching but which does not, apparently, lay claim to historical sanction in the period which lies between the Apostles' days and our own. Mr. Will Spens, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, in putting this theory forward, admits that 'if (as is admitted) we are bound to assert that the Church must possess an actual unity, and if for the purposes of the discussion the Church can adequately be thought of as a society, the Roman conclusion is in the long run inevitable' (*Theology*, March, 1928, 'The Anglican Doctrine of the Church,' p. 137). He then goes on to claim that the Church's Unity is not primarily analogous to the unity of a society but to that of a nation, one in language, blood and racial characteristics, yet at times in its history divided, as a society, by partition or disruption. Combined with this new theory of the nature of the

¹ *Inter-Communion. A Theological Study of Christian Unity.* By A. G. Hebert, M.A. (S.P.C.K.; pp. 128; 2/-).

The Necessity for Catholic Reunion. By the Rev. T. Whitton, M.A. (Williams & Norgate; pp. 163; 5/-.)

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Church is a theory of authority based upon experience; an empirical criterion is the ultimate test of truth; a doctrine is known as true because in the long run it is found by experience to lead men to God. Catholic theology recognises that in the apprehension of revealed Truth there is room for this empirical element—that the experience which is the product of divine grace and the gifts of the Holy Ghost will strengthen the grasp of Faith and deepen its penetration, but this is a very different thing from making such experience the ultimate criterion of the truth. It is not hard to see to what lengths such a theory of authority will carry its holders. It will be found in its ultimate analysis to be subversive of the whole idea of the supernatural because it is primarily subjective and makes of the dogmas of the Church a set of ideas not divinely disclosed but evolved from the human consciousness.

The two books under review treat of the same subject from these divergent points of view. *Intercommunion*, by the Rev. A. G. Hebert, S.S.M., is a book on Christian unity written by an Anglo-Catholic of the new school. He puts his case fairly, sympathetically and with great earnestness, and his understanding of other people's points of view only seems to falter when he comes to deal with the Roman position (e.g., 'The way of Absorption is a false way, because it implies that the truth of Christianity lies entirely on one side, and involves a denial that the Holy Spirit has taught the other side anything worth having,' p. 121). Yet his whole thesis is dominated by the notion that the only authority in the last resort is experience, and that doctrine is essentially human. Speaking of the South Indian Reunion Scheme, of which he approves, he says 'The Episcopate is accepted as a *thing*, as the keystone of Catholic Order; naturally and rightly no definition of the nature of the Episcopate or of Apostolical Succession is demanded. The foundation of Catholic order is the actuality of the Episcopate, not some human doctrine of it' (p. 125). A Catholic, reading this book, finds himself reading of Catholic things and doctrines it is true, but in an unreal atmosphere which makes him feel doubtful as to what words and names really mean. To turn to *The Necessity for Catholic Reunion* is to find oneself in a fami-

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liar atmosphere and on familiar ground. This is a cogent plea or the recognition of the fact that the end of the Oxford Movement is and always has been Rome and that the fundamental difference between an Anglo-Catholic and a Roman Catholic lies not in the Papal claims but in their divergent conceptions of the meaning of the word Church. Mr. Whitton shows in an exceedingly clearly written chapter that the Catholic Church could never alter her relation to Anglo-Catholicism because by doing so she would commit suicide by altering what she has always held and taught about herself—her essential indivisibility. Mr. Whitton pleads for authoritative explanation of the Church's doctrines and position. True explanation, he says, alters the mind of the learner. Here is a mind essentially Catholic; we hope there are many Anglo-Catholics who think as Mr. Whitton thinks.

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A NEW HYMN BOOK¹

We have listened for so long to sentimental words, to slushy tunes, and are so tired of them, that our range grows narrower and narrower, and finally is reduced to a mere handful of hymns which are sung because 'everybody knows them.' Surely this is the dead end of all hymn-singing! Whereas the real art is still alive and practised daily in the Liturgy of the Church, with glorious words and noble tunes. Why must our vernacular hymns fall to the other extreme? For, though vernacular hymn-singing is necessarily an extra-liturgical practice, yet there are many occasions when it can be exercised to the increase of devotion in the faithful, and when it supplies a need possibly more felt now than in the days when the Liturgy itself fulfilled that purpose.

A Daily Hymn Book aroused our expectation. It is a large book, planned on a generous scale, intended to pro-

¹ *A Daily Hymn Book*. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd. Voice Parts, 2/- cloth; 1/4 paper. Complete with accompaniments, 12/6.)