

ordinary door. For these Bloy provides another door. He personally knew the heights and depths, and out of his own experience could help others. Maritain has a fine sentence on this subject: 'To some who would turn giddy at the thought of an abyss, of heights and depths of which they know nothing, Bloy remains an enigma. But there are souls, souls in imminent danger of perishing, who seek beauty in the abyss, and upon whom milder apologetics would have no effect, souls whose reason is so impaired by error that theology cannot act on them. They imagine that obedience to faith is incompatible with the daring of intelligence, or with the play of art and beauty, or they are overcome by the mediocrity of many Catholics. Bloy inspires such starving souls with a presentiment of the glory of God.'

A. N. RAYBOULD.

## REUNION IN CATHOLICITY

THE unity of Christians, Our Lord implies, is a necessary condition if the world is to accept His mission from His Father; He prays that His followers 'may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me' (Jn. xvii, 21). The scandal, the futility, of the continuance of Christian divisions whose origins and meaning have been long forgotten is plain for all to see. Yet nobody with any sense of realities can be blind to the immensity of the obstacles which hinder Christian reunion, nor to the theoretic unsoundness and the practical hopelessness of the various well-meaning but man-made solutions that have so far been offered to the problem. Meanwhile, with bewildering rapidity, the alignments for what looks like becoming the final struggle between Christ and secularism for the soul of civilised man are being formed, leaving those who profess the name of Christ hopelessly divided among themselves.

Anglo-Saxondom has much to answer for in originating and continuing the divisions of Christendom, and it alone is responsible for most of the subdivisions of those divisions—the final atomisation of Christendom, the *reductio ad absurdum* of schism. But to Anglo-Saxondom is due also the origin of many of the efforts of recent years, however pathetically inadequate, to undo the damage. *Faith and Order, Life and Work*, the Branch Theory and the Bridge-Church Approach, all these are of British or American origin. And to all these, and to most other reunion schemes or dreams, 'Rome' has appeared as the great obstructionist.

But now with the publication of an English edition of Père Congar's *Chrétiens Desunis: Principes d'un Œcuménisme Catholique*<sup>1</sup>, it is a 'Roman' who takes the field, and with devastating effect. Gently but firmly he shows the unsoundness of many of the fundamental postulates of the various schemes for man-made reunion. He shows that it is precisely 'Rome' that holds implicit in her theology a genuine 'ecumenicism,' a real hope for a real reunion which will not only satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the 'ecumenicist,' but, what is of paramount importance, will be in accordance with the revealed mind and will of God. 'Rome' offers a solution which is not the product of human prudence or human toleration. Moreover, she does not merely offer a plan or a theory; she offers the reality: the God-given *Ecclesia—de Trinitate et ex hominibus*—manifested in and manifesting God's economy of salvation for mankind. Her faith, penetrated and elaborated by her theology, offers a genuine reunion: not the imposition of a new unity on an existing diversity, but the integration of existing and man-made diversity into existing and God-made unity; an integration which, while eliminating distinctions does not abolish distinctiveness, but at once enriches the diversity by synthesising it in the Whole, and enriches the Whole by actualising with diversity the Catholic capacities of its indestructible Unity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Divided Christendom. A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion.* By M. J. Congar, O.P. (Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press; 12s. 6d.)

So jejune and abstract a formula can convey no impression of the detailed elaboration and concrete realism of Père Congar's treatment. Others have said all that need be said in praise of his pioneer work and in recognition of its importance. Yet the very novelty and originality of it may be a source of misgiving, especially to non-Catholic readers accustomed to a very different note in 'Roman' pronouncements on the subject. Is this indeed genuine and orthodox 'Roman' doctrine?

A distinction is necessary. Père Congar's theology is not new; his dogma is not original. His originality consists in his perception of the implications of that dogma and that theology when applied to the existing facts of Christian division.

By constant reference to primary sources—to Scripture and the Fathers and to the pronouncements of Popes and Councils—Père Congar is at great pains to show that, whatever he thought of his applications, his *doctrine* is not his own, but that of the Catholic Church. Yet here and there it is possible to regret that he employs a novel terminology, or an unfamiliar and sometimes involved line of argument, which may cause the reader unnecessary misgiving. Such, perhaps, is the distinction, fundamental to his argument, between Catholicity as an essential capacity inherent in the nature of the Church, and its external actualisation. This distinction is a valid one; but it would perhaps have been more convincing had it been stated in less unfamiliar language. Post-Tridentine apologetic has stressed the concepts of Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity as *marks* or *notes* of the Church, that is to say as empirically observable facts whereby the Church may be recognised. Yet these external 'marks' are but expressions of those four essentially *supernatural* endowments of the Church which are the objects, not of empirical verification but of supernatural faith alone, and in which we acknowledge our *belief* in the Creeds. Fr. Congar's distinction would perhaps have carried more weight and conviction had it been linked up with this more recognisable distinction between the 'notes' and the supernatural realities of which those 'notes' are but the external expression.

On another fundamental point we could have wished for greater clearness. Père Congar, in line with the unanimous witness of Scripture and Tradition, maintains the identity of the 'institutional' and visible Church with the Mystical Body here on earth. Yet elsewhere, and particularly in the early pages of his chapter on 'The Status of our Separated Brethren,' he maintains that they are not co-terminous, and sometimes he would seem even to contrast them. This is indeed fully in line with much recent Catholic ecclesiology from Germany, but it is, at very least, confusing to the reader. Yet surely it must be maintained that the Mystical Body on earth and the visible institution of the Church are absolutely identical and indeed co-terminous? True, later on in this same chapter, P. Congar suggests that it is not so much the Church that differs from the Mystical Body, but that it is *membership* of the Church-Mystical Body that is 'realised in different ways' (as the Table of Contents happily states it). The principle of solution of the 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus' problem lies not in a dangerous distinction between an invisible Mystical Body and the visible institutional Church, however cautiously formulated, but *solely* (as Billot suggests) in the distinction between invisible membership of the visible Church, and visible membership of the *same*. This chapter would perhaps have gained much in clearness had it elaborated the *analogical* character of the concept of adherence to the Church, and shown how it is realised in an *essentially diverse way* in (for instance) the Catholic saint, any professing Catholic in a state of grace, in the professing Catholic in a state of sin, in the baptised non-Catholic Christian in a state of grace, and in the 'justified,' unbaptised pagan. The elimination of any univocal misconception of Church membership, empirically and statistically verifiable, is necessary not only in any approach to a Catholic 'ecumenicism,' but also for the dissipation of any 'sectarian' attitude towards the Church itself.

It is to be feared that a more serious misgiving may be caused in some readers' minds by the very indulgence—for as such it may appear—of the author towards heresies. Here, it may seem to some readers, is something very dif-

ferent from the authentic voice of historical orthodox Catholicism in its passionate hostility towards any departure from orthodox formulas, its zeal for the purity of the faith. Père Congar's emphasis is all on the fact that heresy is precisely a *partial* apprehension of a Catholic truth, which has become divorced from the whole—a distortion merely which will be rectified when integrated into the totality of the corpus of Catholic doctrine; on the fact that heresies owe their origin to the 'experience' of a 'value' of some particularity of Catholic belief dissociated from the whole. It is right that, since his concern is with the nature and causes of dissidence and the manner of its healing and so with the subjective order, that his emphasis should be precisely here; but it would be regrettable if the distinction between objective truth and its subjective apprehension should become blurred in his readers' minds. Objective truth does not admit of degrees, and still less does doctrine, though our apprehension, valuation and 'experience' of it may well do so. The point has been elaborated in a warm but discriminating appreciation of the book by Père M.-J. Nicolas, O.P., in *Revue Thomiste* (April, 1938, pp. 381, ff.), and more need not be said of it here. But misgivings in the non-Catholic reader's mind might be allayed were Père Congar, in the next edition, to show the consistency of his account of heresy and heretics with traditional Catholic zeal for the purity of dogmatic formulas and its consequent ruthlessness in uprooting heresy.

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The English edition is, for the most part, very readable, and deep gratitude is due to translator and publisher. It is, however, by no means a slavish reproduction of the original, and comparison will reveal a number of omissions, compressions and even alterations. Some of these are evidently intentional, and in general much of the repetitiveness and diffuseness of the original have been eliminated; moreover, a few passages which might be open to misunderstanding have been omitted or remodelled. But other changes are less easy to explain, and it is to be feared that for many readers reference to the original would be necessary if some minor details of the author's thought are to

be rightly understood. In particular, it is hard to understand why so many references to English writers should have been omitted from an English edition. But these blemishes should not be allowed to obscure the importance and value of an English publication of such a book at such a time. It is a book not only for the cleric, the theologian and the 'reunionist,' but for all who would gain a deeper understanding of what is meant by *The Church*, and what it means to be a member of it.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

### EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE ROCK. To *Temps Present* of March 17th François Mauriac contributes a 'Billet' which may serve as an illuminating comment on the articles of Père Chenu on 'Christian Liberty and Obligations' which we are publishing:

I remember that last year a brilliant colleague wrote to me: 'One thing is certain, and it fills me with joy. It is that the Europe of to-morrow will be either Communist or Racist, but in any case it will not be Christian.' I do not know if my colleague is still of the same opinion, for it is precisely the growing horror which these two ideologies inspire which to-day is making even the most hostile and the most indifferent attentive to the eternal youth of the Church.

To Pilate's question, 'What is truth?' the whole world replies unanimously: 'The truth is that which delivers us, that which makes us free.'

Even those for whom the Truth was not made flesh at a given moment of history, and who do not believe that It continues to dwell among us—even those are beginning to see with new eyes the Rock standing firm amidst the storm and conflict of human passions. *All the nations of the earth shall hope in His Name . . . .*

It is indeed temerarious to pretend to interpret the secret designs of God. But at the dawn of this new Pontificate, all the events in the world combine to suggest that crime and error have the providential mission to gather together the scattered sheep around their shepherd. The 'separated brethren' are setting aside their mutual hostility. It is coming to be recog-