

Anglican and continental churches

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ANGLICAN AND CONTINENTAL CHURCHES.

The writer of these lines has never concealed his opinion that the relations between the Anglican Churches and those which have lately been organized in other lands on a very similar, if not a precisely identical basis have for the last thirty years been in a very unsatisfactory condition. It has been impossible to make clear the causes of that change to our Old Catholic brethren, who during that period have been altogether out of touch with the whole Anglican Church, *as a Church*, and have had far too little intercourse with individual Anglicans. Those however, who, like the writer, have watched the currents of opinion in his own Church from the ever-memorable Bonn Conference of 1875 onwards, have little difficulty in understanding how it was that the "little rift" appeared "within the lute, which by and by made all the music mute". The first reason has been the disappearance, as a party, of the old High Anglican school, which at the time of the Vatican Council was flourishing and influential, and of which Bishops Christopher Wordsworth and Harold Browne were the most distinguished representatives. The disappearance of that school left the Tractarian leaders, conspicuous alike for their piety, their learning and their superiority to all unworthy ambitions, masters of the situation. It was not known, until the *Life of Dr Pusey* appeared, that he and Dr Newman had been in frequent communication on Church matters long after the secession of the latter. But this fact, though it does honour to them both as far as their personal character is concerned, proved to be a misfortune for the Church of England. Dr Pusey continued to hope, even against hope, that a possibility existed of the renewal of friendly relations between the Churches of England and Rome. His unbounded influence over his disciples produced a belief, which became the dominant influence in the Anglican Church, that her duty was to work for reunion with Rome, and severely to discourage any steps which might tend

to prejudice the good understanding which it was fondly hoped might eventually be reached. That such an understanding was absolutely impossible was clear to many minds all along. It has now become a realized fact. The old Tractarian school is passing away as rapidly and surely as did the traditional Anglican school before it, and its place has been taken by the neo-Tractarianism inaugurated by the publication of *Lux Mundi*. This later school has abandoned not a few positions which were firmly held by the older Tractarians, and among them the wistful attitude toward Rome which they had unfortunately adopted. The rise of Modernism, and the sympathy felt among the neo-Tractarians for the Modernist attitude and for Modernist principles, was strengthened the distrust felt for Vaticanism and its ideals, and is producing a reaction from the attitude adopted during the last thirty years toward the Old Catholic Churches. Our attitude during that period has naturally been misunderstood by the members of those Churches, and has been attributed to much less respectable causes than the real, though less visible ones, which lay below the surface.

The results of the alienation have been painful enough. The reform movement on the Continent has proceeded, as has been already said, on lines scarcely distinguishable from those on which the Reform in this country in the sixteenth century proceeded. It had therefore a right to expect the warmest sympathy from the Anglican Church. And such sympathy was displayed in no niggard measure by the latter, between 1870 and 1881. Then the chill breezes of suspicion and alienation began to set in. Pan-Anglican Conferences reiterated the warm words of appreciation with which the Anglican Church had formerly welcomed the Old Catholic movement. But they had become *voces et præterea nihil*. As is known to the writer, and to some of his Old Catholic friends of thirty five years' standing, individuals belonging to each of the three sections into which the Anglican Churches are divided vied with one another in inflicting irritating pinpricks upon men who are divided from them theologically by a partition no thicker than a sheet of paper. Two of these sections no doubt were doing this from mere ignorance, culpable as that ignorance was. The third openly, quite unnecessarily, and somewhat ostentatiously condemned their continental brethren because they did not submit to the excommuni-

cations of the Vatican. Episcopal visits to the Old Catholics became less frequent and then altogether ceased. Invitations of representative Old Catholics to England became a thing unknown. In 1887 the late Archbishop of York, then Bishop of Lichfield, accompanied by the present Bishop of Salisbury, visited the Old Catholic centres in order to report to the Lambeth Conference. But a retrograde step was there taken, though not at the instance of the two Bishops commissioned to report. The two Bishops did not communicate at Old Catholic altars, whereas in 1881, on the occasion of the visit of Bishops Reinkens and Herzog to England, the late Archbishop himself, who had not been approached on the subject, expressed his wish to receive Holy Communion with his Continental brethren, and did so at All Saints' Church Cambridge. English, Irish and American Bishops had frequently communicated at Old Catholic altars between 1875 and 1881. But after that time a change set in. The attendance of Bishops and Clergy at the Old Catholic Congresses, at first considerable, dwindled to three or four. The Bishop of Salisbury's last appearance at the Congresses took place in 1904, at Bonn. The American Church, for reasons unknown to the writer, also cooled down, though in 1882 Bishop Herzog was invited across the Atlantic, and recognized as a brother by the American Bishops in full Convention. The Colonial Bishops followed the example set them in England. Even the Irish Archbishops and Bishops have made no sign since the death of the eloquent, broad-minded, and truly catholic Archbishop Plunket. Perhaps the most significant sign of the change of policy was the fact that, when the attack on the validity of Anglican Orders was distributed at the Congress at Rotterdam in 1894, and when that attack was conclusively refuted by the late Bishop Reinkens and by Professor Friedrich, no highly placed official of our Church, save the late Professor Ince, condescended to offer a single word of thanks to our champions on the Continent for their generous vindication of our position.

But enough of a chapter in our Church's history which has done us no credit and which it may be hoped will soon be forgotten. The only reason for referring to it is that it is perfectly well known every where, save in the matter of the "pin-pricks" above referred to; and that it is useless to skin over wounds before they have been probed to the very bottom.

And while the policy pursued by our Church is largely due to our isolation for three centuries and a half from all the religious bodies of the Continent, it is only fair to say that our action though attributable to a deplorable mistake in policy, was at least due to deeper and higher motives than some which have been supposed by our Continental brethren to have actuated us.

I proceed to address my fellow-countrymen, and to enumerate some reasons why we in England should make a strong effort to bridge over the gulf which unhappily divides us from those with whom we ought to be on the most friendly terms. The first ground for a cordial mutual understanding is the similarity of the position occupied by the two bodies. In both of them the cause of their occupying that position was the unreasonable and exorbitant claims of Rome, and in both of them the assertion of their freedom as Catholics from Rome's yoke was met by excommunication. Both of them took their stand on the formal documents drawn up by the Catholic Church and on her Oecumenical Councils. Both of them retained the Apostolic Episcopate which has been in existence in the Christian Church from the first century to the twentieth. Both conduct their worship in the vernacular. Both have permitted their priests to marry. Both have rejected as necessary to salvation the doctrines formulated under Rome's influence since the separation of the East from the West in the eleventh century. And both have left their members free to use Confession to a priest or not, according to their discretion. The next ground is the dignity and moderation of the attitude of Old Catholics toward the Church they have left, or rather, from which they have been driven. They have steadfastly refused to "render railing for railing", nor have they allowed themselves to be provoked into retaliation by the unscrupulous and overbearing treatment they have received from the Vaticanists. They have organized no crusade against their ultramontane opponents, but have been content to welcome such as joined them of their own accord. Next, the calmness and steadiness of their principles demands a hearty recognition from us. Every other communion in the world has of late years been shaken to its foundations by ever widening differences. The Roman, Anglican and Protestant communions have been agitated to their depths by what calls itself Modernism. The

Old Catholic Churches, while strongly sympathizing with the demand for freedom of investigation made by the Modernists, have steadily refused to accept conclusions perhaps somewhat hastily arrived at, but have reposed calmly on the doctrinal basis bequeathed to them from the days when the Church was as yet undivided. Towards modern criticism they have—most wisely as I must believe—adopted a non-committal attitude, not desiring to discourage investigation, nor yet to be prematurely identified with what may prove to be the passing fancy of the hour. The last reason for cordial relations with them Old Catholics is that it would be a mistake to suppose that we have nothing to learn from them. Old Catholicism reposes not only on the faith and zeal of its clergy, but on the calm judgment, practical capacity and deep-seated convictions of its laity. The Anglican Churches, even in the Oversea States, have, it seems to me, but partially learned this lesson. Here at home the Establishment of the Church, combined with the secularization of Parliament in 1829, leaves our laity for the present without any sufficiently defined position and rights within our pale.

My last point will be the steady, but real progress of Old Catholicism throughout the world. For the first ten years of its existence, its position was of necessity uncertain and unstable. While the basis of its organization was unsettled, it could expect few new adherents, and was only too likely to lose old ones. When this difficult question was settled, it still remained to be seen how things would work. At the end of ten years the Old Catholic cause had unquestionably lost more ground than it had won, and its enemies loudly and boisterously predicted its extinction. But it fulfilled to the letter the remarkable prediction of Lamennais, who said, years before the Old Catholic movement was inaugurated, that *if* any attempt to detach Catholics from Ultramontanism were made, it would be met by a howl of derision throughout the Continent of Europe, but that, if the slender band contrived by any means to keep together, it would increase, first of all infinitesimally, then in gradually greater volume, until it became a fact which could no longer be ignored. This is precisely what has happened, and is happening in the case of Old Catholicism. For nearly thirty years it steadily held its ground, but made no progress.

Even when it began to progress, it did not increase by leaps and bounds, but now and then, as at Berlin, added a new centre to those which had gone before. But during the last ten years the progress has been marked. The adhesions to Old Catholicism in Austria through the *Los von Rom* movement have been considerable, and it has for the first time formed communities in Styria and Bohemia. Old Catholic congregations have lately begun to assemble in Stuttgart, Ulm and Strassburg, as well as at Salzburg and Innsbruck in Austria, Lausanne in Switzerland, while occasional worship is now held in the Cantons Tessin (or Ticino) and Fribourg. Numbers of Poles and Czechs, dissatisfied with the working of the Roman Church in the United States, have asked that a Bishop should be consecrated for them, and a number of flourishing congregations have been formed in the neighbourhood of Chicago. Within the last two years a body of Franciscans, monks, nuns and adherents of the "Third Order" have been excommunicated by the Pope; they have asked for the consecration of three Bishops; their request has been granted; and the number of the new adhesions amounts to 200,000—a number larger than the whole of the rest of the Old Catholic body. Of the consecration of Bishop Mathew to preside over Old Catholics in England it is better to say nothing at present, except that his present policy is supposed to be altogether approved neither here nor by his co-religionists on the Continent.

It is certain, however, that Old Catholicism has reached a point when it can no longer be ignored. I would most earnestly urge every member of our Church, be he Bishop, priest, or layman, to take every opportunity of acquainting himself with the condition and prospects of a body so interesting and now becoming so successful. And I would add the expression of a most sincere hope that the bleak winter of indifference and alienation will soon have melted away like a bad dream, and that the genial summer sun of brotherly union and concord will awaken within us on both sides, the warm affection which our similar circumstances and the close resemblance of our faith and aims are, it must be admitted, calculated to arouse.

J. J. LIAS.
