

Correspondances

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CORRESPONDANCES.

I. The Question of English insularity.

Sir, Apropos of the question of English insularity raised in the January number of the *Review*, some remarks lately made to me by an English Rector, together with the state of matters that prompted them, may be of some interest.

For the better understanding of the matter one must remember that the Scottish Church is quite independent of the English, that two centuries ago it was disestablished and disendowed in favour of the Presbyterians owing to the political necessities of William of Orange, that persecuted for long and still misrepresented in the histories used in the public schools it has dwindled to a mere fraction (2,5 per cent) of the population, and finally that it is practically regarded by many Englishmen as a sort of church-of-ease for their own convenience, when away from home, or else as simply an English mission *in partibus barbarorum*.

An article then appeared in a Scottish Church newspaper arguing that the complete Anglicizing of the Scottish Church would be both an injury to herself, and also a blow to the true Catholic Idea, and the writer used these words among others: "It has never been a weakness of Englishmen to be morbidly curious about the roots of their own customs, or criminally eager to throw them aside the moment they cross their own border". Upon which the English Presbyter candidly and with clear vision comments as follows:—"It takes some time for most Englishmen to realize what the true position of the Scottish Church is. I do not think that A. B. (an Englishman known to us both who held appointments in the Scottish Church all his

ordained life) ever was more than *English* Churchman I believe that the closer the relations between the two Churches, and the clearer the distinctions in canons, ceremonies, liturgy, organisation etc., the better for the Universal Church. English people are so insular, that only by having a sister Church with different customs at their own doors, will they be taught to realize the fact that every thing belonging to their own Church is not essential and is not the best possible.”

To each nation of course its own defects, but the beam in our Northern eye is not the question just now, though at the same time I must express the hope that it has not caused me to say anything amiss concerning the Southern mote.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

F. T. F. F.

II. The Anglican Church and her assailants.

Dear Sir,

My brief allusion to the theory which regards the Anglican communion as consisting of *four* distinct bodies, instead of three, as has usually been represented, has brought up once more my antagonist of the *Catholique National*. He must pardon me if I say that he appears to me determined to find fault with us somehow.¹⁾ He has not maintained his former accusations, but has now produced a number of perfectly new ones.

¹⁾ Chancellor Lias not knowing personally the correspondent of the *Catholique national* is entirely mistaken both as to his character and his intention. Far from having wished falsely to accuse the Anglican Church he wished that that Church should show that it did not deserve the accusations made against it. Of those accusations the correspondent of the *Catholique national* is not the author, he has only repeated some of them in a very moderate form. If Chancellor Lias would be so good as to compare the correspondence of the 17th of October and the replies of the 31st of October and the 17th of November, and also that which appeared in the *Revue internationale de Théologie* for last January (pp. 71—72), if he would be so good as to compare these for example with the work of M. Meignan (who was afterwards made a Cardinal) “*Une crise religieuse en Angleterre* (1861),” or with “*Les Partis dans l’Eglise anglicane*” par M. l’abbé Martin (1875); if still more he would compare them with the accusations made by the writers of the Low Church party against the High Church or with the accusations of the High Church against both the Low and the Broad Church, he would see that the moderation of the correspondent in question has been very great indeed.

As your readers have probably not read our controversy, I may tell them that he first stated that we had no Creed, that we gloried in the name of Protestant and rejected that of Catholic, and that the Divinity of Christ was an open question among us.¹⁾ I pointed out that, like the Roman and the Eastern Churches, we recited the Nicene symbol whenever the Holy Mysteries were celebrated among us, and that the word Catholic appears frequently in our formularies, the word Protestant never. I further challenged him to prove his statement that the Divinity of Christ was an open question among us, a statement to which I gave the most categorical denial possible. He replied by referring to the Essays and Reviews controversy, to which I have already referred in your pages. I rejoined by pointing out that the question of the Divinity of Christ was not once referred to in that controversy, which turned entirely on the authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture. He has now returned to the charge. I will do my best to reply to him. It has been intimated to me that in my replies in the *Catholique National* I did not preserve that philosophic calm so eminently desirable in theological discussion. My reply is that had I done so it would probably have been misunderstood. The charges that we in the Anglican Church have no creed, and that we deem the question of the Divinity of Christ too insignificant to insist upon, are felt by an English Churchman as keenly as they would be felt by an Old Catholic, an Eastern Catholic, or a Roman Catholic.²⁾ Had I not repudiated them with a

¹⁾ The actual expressions made use of by the correspondent of the *Catholique national* are as follows: "is it quite accurate", he asks, "to say that parties are divided in the Anglican Church by opinions only, whilst many detest the name of Catholics and others lay claim to it, and when it is possible at the same time to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ and to desire union with an infallible pope?" It will be evident that this question is very different to the affirmations of Chancellor Lias. Nowhere has the correspondent in question accused *the Anglican Church* of being *without faith*. Nowhere has he said that the divinity of Jesus Christ is *an open question*. He has limited himself to the assertion that Anglican writers have denied the divinity of Jesus Christ and that many Anglicans, Broad Church and Low Church, detest the title of Catholics. Certainly the works of Anglican theologians in which the name of Protestants is maintained against that of Catholics are by no means few.

²⁾ The faith and the zeal of Chancellor Lias are indeed very edifying; but accuracy is also an excellent virtue. It is always a mistake for a good critic to exaggerate the opinions of an opponent under the pretence of refuting them better,

certain amount of warmth, it might have been supposed that we in the Anglican Church attached little or no importance to such trifles. Inasmuch as to us, as to all other Catholics, they happen to be matters of the utmost consequence, and as moreover the charges are absolutely and demonstrably untrue, I considered, and still consider myself justified in meeting assertions of this kind exactly as I doubt not they would be met by members of the other bodies I have just mentioned.

The accusations of my antagonist in the last number of the *Revue internationale* are of another nature, and may therefore be met with far more equanimity.

1. With regard to the *Filioque* question we stand in the same position, if I am not mistaken, as the Dutch Old Catholic Church and some other branches of the Old Catholic body. We have inherited the *Filioque* from the time when we were in communion with the Pope, and have never, until lately, been called upon to face the question of its retention or excision. But our whole Church, with one consent, is ready so to interpret the expression as not to contradict the teaching of the Universal Church. That such an interpretation is not impossible was un-animously affirmed at the Bonn Conference of 1875, under the presidency of Dr von Döllinger.

2. If we accept the "letter" of the Nicene Creed my antagonist says we do not accept the traditional sense of it.¹⁾ As he does not tell us what that traditional sense is, nor how and where we contradict it, I might pass by this accusation. I am not aware of any material difference on any fundamental points between the *église haute*, the *église large* and the *église*

because far from refuting them, he only strengthens them by discussing side issues. The opponent of Chancellor Lias, I repeat, has nowhere made the assertions which have been attributed to him.

¹⁾ The correspondent in question has never accused the *Anglican Church* of rejecting the traditional sense of the Nicene Creed. He has only spoken of certain members of that Church; these are his own words: "Is it not the spirit of the *Broad Church* not to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ as it has been acknowledged in the seven Œcumenical Councils? And in the *Ritualistic* party is there not generally an erroneous notion of Catholicity, so erroneous as even to favour union with Rome, which as it exists at present is not catholic but papal? As to the *Low Church*, is it certain that its manner of explaining the Creed agrees with that of the *High Church*? There are the *doubts* which surround, not merely the opinions, but even the faith itself."

basse in relation to the dogmas of the Creed. That there are divergent schools of theology among us I do not deny. But they no more affect our title to be regarded as Catholics than they affect that of any other portion of the Catholic Church. Schools of theology always have existed in the Church, and they always will exist as long as the Church is militant. Happily you, Sir, have yourself supplied me with a sufficient answer to my critic on this point. Speaking of the “*esprit orthodoxe*”, to which, while adhering to the “*letter*” of the orthodox formularies, the Old Catholics are represented as strangers, you say “*nos adversaires malheureusement se dispensent de le définir; l'accusation et la calomnie leur sont ainsi plus commodes.*” “*Nos adversaires, au lieu de se soumettre comme nous au criterium orthodoxe, s'érigent en dominateurs et prétendent imposer leurs propres interprétations, leurs opinions d'école, leur esprit particulier, comme s'ils avaient le monopole de l'esprit orthodoxe, comme si leur petit parti était l'Eglise orthodoxe même.*” No one, Sir, will accuse you of lacking the true philosophic calm with which theological questions should be discussed. *Mutatis mutandis*, I adopt your words as my own.

3. I have already repeatedly explained that our clergy are not bound to anything beyond a general agreement with the principles maintained in the Thirty-nine Articles. The phrase “*s'obstine*” does not express our attitude in taking no steps at present to free ourselves from the obligation. The relations between Church and State in this country are likely soon to undergo a thorough revision. When that revision is carried out—a process that will take some time—we shall be in a position to discuss with Christendom the question of the retention or abandonment of the aforesaid Articles.

4. The Catholic Church has never decreed that there are seven Sacraments, and neither less nor more, nor that the seven accepted in the Eastern and Roman Churches are all equally necessary to salvation.

The teaching of the Anglican Church is that among the many Sacraments recognized by the Church there are two which stand out above all others, as generally necessary to salvation, and as having been specially instituted by Christ. The words of our twenty-fifth Article must be interpreted by that of the Book of Homilies, which, as Art. XXXV tells us

“contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times”. In the Homily on Common Prayer and Sacraments, while the pre-eminence of the two great Sacraments ordained by Christ is plainly asserted, the name of Sacrament is by no means denied to other rites and ceremonies. “In a general acception,” the Homily proceeds “the name of a Sacrament may be attributed to anything whereby an holy thing is signified. In which understanding of the word, the ancient writers have given this name, not only to the other five, commonly of late years taken and used for supplying of the number of the seven Sacraments, but to divers and sundry other ceremonies, as to oil, washing of feet, and such like; not meaning thereby to repute them as Sacraments in the same signification that the two forenamed Sacraments are.” As to the first four Œcumenical Councils, they have been mentioned apart from the rest in an Act of Parliament. But the Church of England since the Reformation has never definitely stated how many Councils she holds to be Œcumenical, though the vast majority of our divines have rejected the Second Council of Nicæa. The more the history of our Church and country is studied—for the question is not one that lies in a nut-shell—the more it will be found that the ideas entertained on the Continent of our position are very far indeed removed from the truth.

I now proceed to make a few observations on letter III, pp. 153—155 of your last issue. Of course we do not regard suggestions for the modification of our dogmatic standards as intended to humiliate or insult us. But then, on the other hand, we must not be regarded as insulting other communities if we intimate that, in our opinion, *their* dogmatic standards might also with advantage be modified. The great Head of the Church has been pleased within the last century to vouchsafe to us a vast expansion of our communion, and a wonderful increase in its influence. We cannot fairly be charged with presumption if we believe we may recognize in this fact a signal mark of His favour, and a proof that we need not stand before the rest of Christendom as outcasts or suppliants, but as an integral portion of the Church of Christ, qualified to discuss on equal terms with other sundered branches of the one great whole what are the proper conditions on which reunion should take place.

In regard to the first condition laid down in the aforesaid letter we have to remark that as the word “Holy” is recited

in our daily offices, and required of every candidate for Baptism in the Apostles' Creed, its omission in our copies of the Nicene Creed is plainly due to accident and accident alone. And it is clear that we can hardly be expected to remove in a moment the word *Filioque* from our Creed when it has been there for so many centuries. We could not take such a step without disturbing considerably the minds of our faithful laity. And it was with a view to this difficulty that Dr von Döllinger devised the ever memorable formula of concord at the Bonn Conference of 1875. Personally, I quite agree with my friend Mr Howard in desiring the removal of a phrase which ought never to have been introduced. But on the other hand I am quite sure that the Church of England as a Church is not yet prepared to adopt that course.

The second point I have already dealt with. It is not for me to attempt to prophesy what may be the ultimate determination of our Church in the matter. But it is quite certain that she is not at present willing to admit that there are neither more nor less than seven Sacraments, or that what she has described as the two great Sacraments of the Gospel do not stand on a different and higher plane than any other rite or ceremony whatsoever.

On the third point I have nothing to add to what I have said already. The Church of England as a whole is not at present prepared to accept the Second Council of Nicæa as Ecumenical, because the large majority of her divines and members regard its decisions as conflicting with that Canon of Vincentius which forms the *fourth* condition of the letter I am considering, and to which the Anglican Church has ever steadfastly adhered. I do not, however, wish to describe our attitude as irreconcilable on this point. If the Eastern Churches are as ready to tender explanations on this point as we are on the *Filioque*, the matter might, no doubt, be easily arranged.

On the fifth point it is my belief that the authorities of our Church would have no hesitation whatever in declaring that the 39 Articles "ne sont ni dogmatiques, ni obligatoires, mais un simple document théologique de 1562," provided they are permitted to add that, properly interpreted, they contain nothing contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

It would however be folly to ignore the fact that a considerable number of the members of the Church of England

entertain very strong objections to prayers addressed to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints in the public offices of the Church, and that this point is likely to prove a formidable hindrance to reunion. If as I am given to understand, the objections of many among us on this point can be minimized, it would be well to explain how. It is for this purpose of mutual explanations that the *Revue internationale* came into existence. And it could do no better work than to smooth the way to an understanding on matters such as those I have mentioned.

In answer to the questions you put in pp. 206, 207, I reply that it is rather difficult to label our Bishops with party appellations. The shades of opinion among us are very delicately drawn. It is possible that among our Bishops 11 incline towards the High Church party, eight towards the Broad Church, nine towards the Moderate Church, and five towards the Low Church parties. But the attempt to characterize is always a little uncertain. There is always a small proportion of shrewd, ambitious men among us who will trim their sails in the direction in which they imagine the wind to be blowing. Mr Gladstone's sympathies, as well as those of Lord Salisbury, have been decidedly in the High Church direction, but how much the latter will be affected by the remonstrance addressed to him by the Low Church members of his own political party, it is impossible to say.

It is quite true that a "Churchmen's Liberation League" has been formed with a view to promote the Disestablishment of the Church. But it is very slenderly supported. The "Church Reform League", on the contrary, which has set itself to revise instead of destroying the relations between Church and State inaugurated at the Reformation, is making considerable progress. At a recent meeting in London, the Bishops of Winchester and Lichfield, as well as Bishop Barry, late Metropolitan of Australia, were present, and while declining to commit themselves unreservedly to the programma of the League, shewed considerable sympathy with it.

I remain, dear Sir, faithfully yours,

J. J. LIAS.

East Bergholt Rectory, Colchester, Feb. 3, 1897.
