

## CORRESPONDENCE

### REUNION

*To the Editor of* BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—Before retiring from what may be already deemed a too prolonged discussion perhaps I may be allowed to touch on a few points made by Fr. White in his letter of last month.

More than once appeal has been made to the *Satis cognitum* of Leo XIII as though it were greatly in support of a plea for "corporate reunion." As far as I can discover that encyclical has no direct bearing on the topic. Nor do any of the authorities cited justify the claim that Baptism, when received in heresy or schism, imparts visible membership of the visible Church. This remarkable contention stands utterly without support from the manner in which children (*impuberes*) are received into the Church. Those baptized and brought up as non-Catholics are bound, before being admitted to the Sacraments, to repudiate heresy by a formal profession of faith. Naturally their reception does not involve absolution from censures since by common law they are exempt from ecclesiastical penalties (Canon 2230).

The precise force in its proper context of the excerpt taken from the *Satis cognitum* is that the Church is neither wholly invisible nor wholly visible, but is at once composed of visible and invisible elements, which may be likened to the body and soul in man. Hence it is not stated that "those who imagine that there is a hidden and invisible Church are in grievous and pernicious error"; but "those who gratuitously imagine and conceive the Church as hidden and in nowise visible are in grievous and pernicious error." It is not easy to understand how the Councils of Florence and Trent contribute to the more than singular theory that non-Catholic Christians are in an unqualified sense united to and members of the one only visible Church. Making the words of St. Augustine his own, Pope Leo affirms the exact opposite when he says that dissenters and those out of communion with the unity of the Church are not "in the Church."

From St. Thomas Aquinas nothing more can be gathered than that Baptism impresses a character, and the recipient is made a participator of ecclesiastical unity from which is derived the right to approach the Holy Table of the Eucharist (*Summa*, III, lxiii, 6; lxvii, etc.) unless, of course, as the Code of Canon Law now lays down, "there is some obstacle impeding the bond of communion with the Church" (Canon 87). We may then without error readily admit that non-Catholic Christians in virtue of their Baptism and good will are united to the invisible soul of the Church, even though through no fault of their own they are out

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of visible communion with her. The Church is nevertheless solicitous for those outside and may cite them before her tribunal (Trent, Sess. XIV, c. ii). Beyond that they have no visible membership in the Church. Consequently there is need for reconciliation and reception.

The lay communions to which non-Catholic Christians adhere remain what they have always been by origin. History is witness that the Elizabethan Establishment and other similar bodies are not simply "split off" segments from the Church. As corporations they are not and never have been part of or united to the one and undivided Church of Christ. The principle then applies "what has never been united cannot be reunited." Baptism of individuals does not in the least alter the essential diversity of religious bodies in England from the pre-Reformation Church. Rooted and founded in heresy they naturally have an entirely different ethos and do not even belong to the same genus. Their reconciliation to the Church as corporations is impossible, nor can this be implied in liturgical or any other prayer for Christian unity.

A way of reconciliation is surely open to all non-Catholic Christians by their entering into communion with the visible Church, either individually, or in groups, large or small. But this reconciliation is not "corporate reunion." (Clearly comparison with certain Churches of the East does not fit the facts.) We may well remind ourselves of the concise words of Leo XIII when speaking of our "separated brethren": "Dispersa membra atque seiuncta non possunt eodem cum capite, unum simul effectura corpus, cohaerere" (*Satis cognitum*).

I am, Sir,

Yours, etc.,

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

### THE AQUINAS SOCIETY

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS*

SIR,—I ask the hospitality of your columns to state that a Retreat will be given at Blackfriars Priory Church, Oxford, between the dates September 7 to 11, 1935, by the distinguished Theologian, Rev. Père Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Professor of Theology at the Collegio Angelico, Rome.

The conferences will be in French.

Anyone desiring to follow the Retreat is invited to communicate with the undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

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Hon. Sec. Aquinas Society.

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