

PROFESSOR GOUDGE ON REUNION

ON Sunday, October 23rd, Professor Goudge preached a sermon in St. Mary's, Oxford, which has attracted a good deal of attention. Pleading for Reunion, he argued that while the Church as depicted in the New Testament seemed to have a monopoly of the Holy Spirit, present-day facts showed that such monopoly no longer existed. He admits that even 'our fallen Sister' speaks at times with the authority of the Spirit, nor 'can we say for one moment that the Spirit of Pentecost is not present among the Protestant communions,' while 'a strong grasp of the Apostolic faith is found in the Church of England.' But all have fallen short: Rome by her arrogance, cruelty, and refusal to repent, while England and all the Churches outside the Roman communion have suffered from 'the nationalism from which the Roman Church is free.' No shortcoming is expressly attributed to the so-called 'free' Churches; indeed, Professor Goudge almost idealises them: 'Spiritual freedom is the greatest of their traditions; there will be no return to us until we, too, are free.'

What then, he asks, is the way to reunion? He frankly acknowledges that he does not see it yet, and that we must all be content, therefore, to go slowly. But he sees room for hope in the ideas which prevailed at Lausanne: 'we should jealously guard just that which corresponds to the Apostolic teaching;' and the key to that lies in Apostolic Succession. 'If,' he concludes with a certain wistfulness, 'till better days come, we gladly remain members of the Church of England, it should not be because it is the "established" form of Church polity . . . but because in the Church of England, though not through it alone, we have learned what little we know of God, and believe that, being what we are, it is there that we best can serve Him.'

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There was much in this sermon with which a Catholic does not agree, but there was much, too, that all can endorse: the remark, for instance, that there can be no 'self-sufficient Churches,' also that the Church depicted in the New Testament is essentially one. But the statement that while he believes that Christ has at times spoken by the Roman Pontiff he cannot believe that Peter has ever spoken by Leo or his successors, should make Dr. Goudge dread meeting the Fathers of Chalcedon. When he refuses to set aside the witness of the New Testament, despite the difficulty of harmonising its delineation of the work of the Holy Spirit with to-day's 'facts,' we are at one with him. But when he suggests that whereas 'the New Testament records reveal to us God's abiding purpose . . . the facts of the present time reveal the ways of His Providence, when His purpose has been set aside,' and yet goes on to say that 'God has revealed to us the Church that He desires, and it is no other than the One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church which we find in the New Testament,' we are inclined to ejaculate with St. Optatus: 'You have never grasped what is meant by "the Church," hence your lamentable state, of confusion!'¹

Dr. Goudge takes for granted that his major premise is unquestionable, namely that the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit as was bestowed on the infant Church at Pentecost is now-a-days to be found amongst those Christian bodies which repudiate the notion of Apostolic Succession. But is it so unquestionable?

The whole question turns, so it seems to us, on the real meaning of Pentecost. St. John says, apropos of Christ's words: 'He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,' that this referred to 'the Spirit which

¹ *De Schismate Donatistarum*, i. 10 at the close.

they should receive who believed in Him, for as yet the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (Jn. vii, 38-39). But the Holy Spirit had spoken by the Prophets, nor would anyone deny that the Patriarchs had been filled with the same Spirit. Pentecost must, then, have signified some peculiar outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Nor can we suppose that this was 'peculiar' merely because it involved the Gift of Tongues, for that was but a passing phase. St. John says that those who believed in Christ were to receive the Spirit, implying that this was no mere movement from without—an impulse—but something residing in them, an abiding possession. But was such possession of the Holy Spirit peculiar to those who believed in Christ already come? Have we any right to deny its possession to those who 'died according to faith, not having received the promises but beholding them afar off and saluting them' (Heb. xi, 13)? If, then, Pentecost was 'peculiar' neither in the accompanying Gift of Tongues nor in the abiding possession of the Holy Spirit by men who believed in Christ, why was it of such supreme importance?

Dr. Goudge himself furnishes the answer: 'At Pentecost the Spirit came upon them, and made of them that Church which is the Body of Christ.' It was an outpouring, then, which was corporate; it fell on individuals, of course, but not in their individual character so much as in their corporate character as members of a society. Peter as an individual surely had the indwelling Spirit when, by a Divine revelation, he made his great Confession of faith; at Pentecost he received the same Spirit as a member of that Body of Christ which is the Church, as that member, too, which was the head of that Body on earth.

What, then, of those who owing to schism or heresy are not members of the visible Church of Christ? Can they possess the Holy Spirit as an abiding indwelling

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principle? Indubitably, for 'the Spirit breatheth where He will.' What do they receive as Pentecost comes round year by year, and pray 'Come Holy Spirit'? A fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost according to their individual merits, but not as members of the corporate visible society which is the Church. They receive, indeed, the Holy Spirit, but not precisely in His character as 'the soul of the Church,' for as such He is especially the Spirit of Unity, and the separated members are outside that complete Unity.

HUGH POPE, O.P.

LIFE'S DESIRE

WHAT of my life,
This pining, never-slaked, thirsting life of
mine?
What if the nectar-sweet and mystic wine,
For which it doth repine,
And maketh instant strife,
Ne'er pass but only touch the heart's parched, gaping
lips?
For that swift change inevitable, rude with ruthless
might,
Doth snatch away the dreamed delight.
Not ours to stay Time's headlong stream, that slips
Remorseless, resistless, unimpassioned, heedless on.
Not ours to hold the meteor-moment,
Now here—then e'en while we think on't—gone.
'Twas so meant,
That desire might grow wise with languishing;
Grasp at, clutch emptiness of a dream;
And look up, beyond, away from all that merely seem,
To Beauty, Goodness, Truth unchanging, fulfilling,
ravishing.

J. S. KING, S.J.